

THE
STILL SMALL VOICE,
A Poem

NORMAN B. YONGE.



Benjamin Hunt.

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The Still Small Voice.



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THE
STILL SMALL VOICE.

A Poem

IN FOUR CANTOS.

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,
TO THE RIGHT HON. C. B. ADDERLEY, M.P.,
LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF EDUCATION.

BY
NORMAN B. YONGE,
AUTHOR OF "THE SHADOW OF THE YEW," ETC.



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To the

Right Hon. C. B. Adderley, M.P.,

- (late President of the Council of Education)
the trusted and valued representative of that
Division of the County of Stafford in
which his forefathers home is
situated,

This Poem is

(by his kind permission)

Dedicated,

as a slight tribute of respect and in gratitude for
his staunch adherence to those true Con-
servative principles which are equally
dear to himself and to
the Author.

Overthorpe Parsonage, Banbury.

June, 1860.

CANTO I.

The Cloud.

The Still Small Voice.

Spring gently dawned upon the slumbering wold,
Like quickening sunbeams on an arctic shore,
That lies entombed in dreariness and cold ;
The budding meads with daisies silvered o'er,
Or gaily decked in emerald and gold,
The fairy imprint of her footsteps bore ;
May coyly tripped from April's weeping bower,
And sweetly smiled on morn's bewitching hour.

From bough to bough the full-robed woodbine
sprung,

Or roamed in wantonness from tree to tree ;

The newly-tinted ivy fondly clung

Round her old oak in maiden constancy ;

The bursting hawthorn o'er the hedgerows flung

Their summer robe, rejoicing to be free ;

While heaven re-echoed with the songs of mirth,

That welcomed May, revisiting the earth.

The woods, empurpled with the lychnis red,

Blushed in the sunlight, or at early morn

Wept tears of dewy splendor o'er the bed

Of the gay daffodil, but lately shorn

Of full blown honors, o'er the woodland spread

In streams of waving gold, when spring was born ;

And o'er the swelling hillocks, rayed with light,

Stellaria flung a gleam of starry white.

The rising sunbeam on the Isis played,
That held a mirror to his golden ray ;
Sported and danced upon the sloping glade,
Chasing the shadows of the night away ;
Gleamed on the sturdy blackthorn, overlaid
With snowy bloom, that mocked the hawthorn
spray ;
While from Oxonia's coronet of spires
Flashed forth the answer of a hundred fires.

Nature herself, attired in heavenly grace,
Breathed in the balmy fragrance of the air,
As if her arms were longing to embrace
The grovelling heart, and free the soul from care,
And charm the worldling, that his eyes might trace
The home of angels faintly pictured there ;
Buoyed with the hope, that that calm scene of love
Might raise his thoughts from earth to Heaven
above.

That morning through the green lanes of the wood,
That wound beneath the over-arching trees,
A youthful student roamed, or silent stood
Gazing, as if his heart were ill at ease ;
His dark hair floated o'er his shoulders, wooed
By the soft whispers of the western breeze,
That fanned his brow, but could not chase away
The gloom of thought, which thickened day by day.

The tide of song swept wavelike o'er the grove,
And fragrance breathed from every dewy pore ;
The sweetest strains that music ever wove
To his cold heart no inspiration bore ;
E'en in the linnet's gushing tale of love
He heard a wild bird's note and—nothing more !
Nor marked he in the skylark's matin lays
The tone of gratitude or voice of praise :

Or when he rested on the cowslip mound,
And plucked the flowers, that grew in golden
rings
Within his reach, he cast them to the ground
Uncared for ; so the heartless spoiler sings
In beauty's circling arms, with roses crowned,
Then on the world his victim coldly flings,
Robbed of her maiden purity of youth,
Despoiled of innocence and virgin truth.

Strange was the mood that bade him turn away
His wandering footsteps from the favorite nook,
Where amid violets he was wont to stray,
Listing the music of the chattering brook ;
And fondly gazing on the charms that lay
Traced on the open page of Nature's book,
Wrapped in a joy, that to his glowing heart
No other mistress could as yet impart.

She was his boyhood's friend, he loved to roam
O'er hill and dale with Nature for his guide ;
He loved the wild dash of the ocean foam,
As wave flung wave against the mountain side ;
For Nature's bosom was his childhood's home,
And Nature's loveliness his manhood's bride :
And from their spirit-marriage sprung a train
Of thoughts, long nurtured in their parent's brain.

There was a love possession could not cloy,
A beauty written in the flower-robed wood,
And in the wild bird's song a strain of joy
That filled his heart with rapture, till he stood
And gazed upon her as an amorous boy
On the rich charms of budding womanhood,
When the first touch of sympathetic fire
Thrills through the veins in streams of hot desire.

He loved ; and where he loved his heart adored,
And wrapped in wonderment he worshipped, till
He hailed in Nature's sovereign the lord
Of heaven and earth—the source of good and ill—
The changeless being, whose all-powerful word
Called all things into life and rules them still ;
The One primæval cause ;—the king of earth,
Who knows no ending, as he knew no birth.

So dreamed his young life onward, till his dream
Woke in the fulness of reality ;
E'en as the rippling of the wayside stream
In whirling torrents surges to the sea ;
Or as the first gray-tinted morning beam
O'erspreads with light the heaven's blue canopy ;
And he, who slept a visionary youth,
Awoke the enemy of Gospel truth !

The breeze, that softly murmured overhead,
So gently whispered, that it seemed to stay
To rouse the primrose from her mossy bed,
And bid the laughter-loving woods be gay ;
The fading windflower raised her drooping head
To steal a last long look at that bright day ;
The dew-drops trembling in the lily's bell,
Lit up with sunshine, sparkled as they fell.

Sweet were the woods, and from the fields beyond
Floated the fragrance of the cowslip's breath ;
An emerald hue was greening every frond,
That burst the prison of its winter sheath ;
E'en the dark surface of the stagnant pond
Was interlaced with a white crowfoot wreath ;
All things were bright, and yet their shadow fell
Upon a heart that loved them but too well !

Whence those deep groans, that from his heart
but now

Burst on the sunny air in smothered sighs ?

Whence the dark cloud that hung upon his brow,
That paled his cheek, and dimmed his flashing
eyes,

That fixed them spell-bound on the earth below,
As if he dared not raise them to the skies ?

Then faded imperceptibly away,

Like night's dark shadow at the dawn of day.

When speeds the wingèd arrow to its mark,

The air divides, but only to unite ;

When o'er the ocean flies the bounding bark,

She leaves no traces of her onward flight ;

The lightning flashes through the trembling dark,

Yet brands no fiery pathway on the night ;

So oft-times o'er the heart in joy or woe

The tides of passion swiftly ebb and flow.

What was it ? ye tall poplars, rearing high

Your fluttering heads, and thou, majestic oak,
Spreading thy broad green banner to the sky,

Whence came that voice, that for a moment broke
The spell of sleeping conscience, till its sigh

Beneath thy shade in trembling accents spoke ?
As if his troubled spirit yearned to tell
The harrowing doubt to her he loved so well.

He rose that morning, as he loved to rise,

Ere fell one jewel from the crown of night,
Ere one star faded in the sunlit skies,

To lurk unseen amid the glare of light ;
Like guardian angels' ever-watchful eyes

Fixed on our path though hidden from our sight ;
Ere yet the daybeam's first electric spark
Flashed from the sun, and lit the shivering dark.

The city slept in silence ; not a sound
Signalled the near approach of dawning day ;
Grim towers like shapeless hulks above him frowned ;
Like dark broad gulfs the streets before him lay ;
House after house seemed starting from the ground,
As rolled the gray mist stealthily away ;
Saint Mary's, dimly looming through her shroud,
Gloomed like the giant shadow of a cloud.

Lighter and lighter grew the lurid air,
But still her tall spire seemed to pierce the skies,
And lose itself in darkness ; here and there,
With folded arms, and cold, yet pleading, eyes,
Each in his cell, stone-sculptured saints in prayer,
And windows garlanded with rainbow dyes,
And cross-crowned martyrs glimmered to the day,
Tinged by the sunbeam's beautifying ray.

For now the sun rose proudly from the East,

Treading on crimson vestments like a king,

His first bright daybeams speedily released

The birds from silence ; and the joyous ring
Of music called the glad woods to the feast,

Which nature held in honor of the spring ;
But still young AUBREY lingered by the stream
Of winding Cherwell in a trance-like dream.

Soon as day burst, fresh from the travail pain

Of night's dark womb, to live the life of man—
Born but to wax and brighten, fade and wane,

In cloud or sunshine for a little span,
Then, earth-created, turn to earth again—

While night retreated slowly, pale and wan,
To watch in silence by the western wave,
At morn her parent and at eve her grave :

Then, when the sun upon the verge of day
 Ströde from the east to mount his golden throne,
As when the first kiss of his virgin ray
 Inspired with trembling chords of mystic tone
The marble tomb, where mighty Memnon lay,
 And charmed to utterance the lifeless stone—
So now Saint Magdalen owned his magic power,
As rose the pealing anthem from her tower.

Then, ere its lingering sweetness died away,
 Voice after voice took up the swelling song,
And breathed such heartfelt fervor in the lay,
 That swept in full-toned eloquence along,
That in its gushing measures seemed to play
 An answering echo of the heavenly throng,
Who caught the strain, and registered above
That oath of fealty to the God of love.

It seemed endowed with more than mortal power,

The unearthly breathing of a voiceless lyre,

Or weird-like minstrelsy at midnight hour—

Glowed the red life-blood in his veins like fire—

But when he saw on Magdalen's topmost tower

The sunlit faces of the white-robed choir,

A nameless feeling quivered through his breast,

Pregnant in meaning, but as yet unguessed.

The low soft echo of the dying lay

A moment slept; then, like the whispering breeze,

That in the woodland valleys loves to play

In amorous dalliance with the budding trees,

Sweeps with a full tide on its howling way,

In wild gusts shrieking o'er the startled seas—

So, gathering strength from silence, rose again

The full-toned chorus of the swelling strain.

Saint Magdalen's May-day Chant.

O Thou, the Unbegotten One !

O Thou, the sole-begotten Son !

O Holy Spirit, One in Three !

The undivided Trinity.

O Father, Spirit, Son

To Thee alone we pray,

Immortal Three in One,

The Life—the Truth—the Way.

He does not lead us by a way

Untrodden or unknown ;

He lights the path with mercy's ray,

Which He once trod alone :

E'en from the hallowed manger-floor,

To that dark mountain's brow,

Where His bright footsteps gleamed before,

And love can trace them now.

Thorns there may be, that wound our feet,—

They pierced His bleeding head ;

False friends in lifetime we may meet,—

His friends on Calvary fled :

Our destined pathway may not lie

Through beauty's blooming bowers ;

But faith will fix a stedfast eye,

And turn the thorns to flowers !

O Thou, the Unbegotten One !

O Thou, the sole-begotten Son !

O Holy Spirit, One in Three !

The undivided Trinity.

O Father, Spirit, Son

To Thee alone we pray,

Immortal Three in One,

The Life—the Truth—the Way.

He passed through this dark world of guilt,

Pure, as the noonday light ;

So pure, that when His blood was spilt,
Gathered the gloom of night ;—
No wonder that a sable cloud
Both heaven and earth o'erspread ;—
And wrapped them in a mystic shroud,—
The God of Truth was dead !
Yet lives to cleanse the souls, that blush
In scarlet like the rose,
Pure from their guilt-empurpled flush,
As mountain-cradled snows :
And gently leads His wandering flock
Through pleasant pasture-land,
Gives water from the living rock,
Food from the Shepherd's hand.

O Thou, the Unbegotten One !
O Thou, the sole-begotten Son !
O Holy Spirit, One in Three !
The undivided Trinity.

O Father, Spirit, Son
To Thee alone we pray,
Immortal Three in One,
The Life—the Truth—the Way.

For us He paid the costly price,
Gave all that He could give,
Our sin's atoning sacrifice,
He died that we might live :
His pangs no mortal tongue may tell,
No pen depict the strife,
When, bursting through the gates of Hell,
Arose the Lord of Life.
'Twas figured on the cross of death,
Transparent through the gloom ;
It lingered on His faltering breath,
And hovered round His tomb ;
'Twas flowered upon His mortal way,
And brightly traced above

In letters of eternal day :—

“ HE LIVED A LIFE OF LOVE ! ”

O Thou, the Unbegotten One !

O Thou, the sole-begotten Son !

O Holy Spirit, One in Three !

The undivided Trinity.

O Father, Spirit, Son

To Thee alone we pray,

Immortal Three in One,

The Life—the Truth—the Way.

E'en as some wanderer in a starlit grove,

Lists to the midnight warbler's plaintive air,

And charmed by that sweet thrilling strain of love

In wrapt attention fondly lingers there,

Till the calm peace, that breathes from heaven above

Attunes his glowing thoughts to silent prayer,

O'er Aubrey's heart a sudden spell was thrown,

As if the music spoke to him alone.

As on the wearied captive's hopeless ear

The long-lost sound of freedom's joyous tone ;

As Hope's sweet voice and sympathising tear

On softening hearts, once hardened into stone ;

As the soft strains of love, disarming fear,

On bruised spirits, bowed at mercy's throne ;

So fell those simple notes of Gospel truth—

Childhood's first lesson, learned in early youth.

The bursting deluge falls and beats in vain

On marble stones, that time will wear away ;

The raging seas of Ocean rend in twain

The granite rock, that mocks the silvery spray ;

The shivered oak lies stretched upon the plain,

Yet still defies the canker of decay ;

So man's proud heart, reproved against his will,

Resists the striving of the spirit still.

The mirror may reflect one fleeting ray
Of burning suns, that in noon splendor shine ;
Though from our hearts too swiftly fade away
The tones of eloquence almost divine ;
Like resolutions at the break of day,
Which round our souls at midnight seemed to
twine :
'Twas much to Aubrey that that germ of thought
Perished not instantly, a thing of naught !

Have ye ne'er seen, in some night-haunted cave—
Where big black drops fall from the reeking dome
With sudden splash upon the gurgling wave,
That loves the blackness of its rocky tomb,
And echoing footsteps startle e'en the brave—
A light faint flickering through the murky gloom,
Powerless and pale, yet glimmering from above,
Like Memory floating round a buried love ?

Even to Heaven our steps cannot be led

Against our will, though God the way prepare ;
And when o'er Aubrey's heart the light was shed,
It might have lived, and waxed, and brightened
there,

Had but its first faint beams been nourished

With the soft feeding oil of trustful prayer ;
But faded now, and in its dying glow
Cast but a passing shadow on his brow.

It gleamed in brightness, but it died away,
Like lightning darting through a curtained room ;
It shone, like Memory's long-forgotten ray
Through the dark mist of mind's imprisoned gloom ;
Like prayer on hearts that never learned to pray ;
Or powerless moonbeams smiling on a tomb :
Then passed away, uncherished and unfed,
The morn that hailed it living—wept it dead !

For saddened hearts immersed in gloomy care,

For wandering restless spirits ill at ease,

What charm so potent as the mountain air?

What voice so cheering as the summer breeze?

No maiden's blushing face is half as fair

As Nature's, when she gems the budding trees :

And weaving crowns for golden summer hours

Drops from her lap bouquets of living flowers—

For there are Joy and Beauty, Hope and Love,

Scattered like jewels on the teeming earth,

Speaking to man from bush, and bower, and grove ;

Joy bursting in the wild bird's song of mirth—

Love beaming in the bright blue heaven above—

And Hope rejoicing over Beauty's birth ;

Peace hallowing all, with calm yet glowing light

Steals on the heart, like stars upon the night.

Wrapped in the gray mist's silver-netted veil

Tree after tree fades slowly from the hill ;

Softly the snowflake, drifted on a gale,

Falls on its kindred snowflake lying still ;

Calmly the river's full-tide billows sail,

Whose infant gambols chased the whirling mill ;

So slowly, softly, and divinely sweet

Peace steals on earth, when night and morning meet.

Peace, like the dawn of childhood's freshness rife

With youth's love-visions, and the rosy flush

Of hope, ere yet the busy hum of life

Or disappointment lower ; the tranquil hush,

Calm, solemn moments, ere the battle-strife

Bids the red heart with angry passions blush ;

The active peace, which nerves the heart with power

To meet the trials of a darker hour.

With softer steps she walks the twilight vale,
 With purer rays bedecks the moonlit hill,
In sweeter accents to the evening gale,
 That dips wave-kissing willows in the rill,
Repeats the music of her morning tale,
 Through the hot noonday faintly lingering still ;
And breathes a soothing spirit on the breast—
The satisfaction of a heart at rest.

Oh ! at the close of some bright happy day,
 To hear in faith the songs of mercy trilled
By angel lips, calling the heart to pray—
 The heart with yearning aspirations filled,
To learn the music of that heavenly lay,
 And feel its earthly voice of passion stilled,
To tread the path, which saints and martyrs trod
With faltering steps, yet eyes upraised to God ;

To feel the thoughts soar upward into light
 Along a viewless ladder, such as rose
From earth to heaven on that mysterious night,
 When Jacob fled from his avenging foes,
Where angels watch in robes of spotless white
 To catch each prayer for mercy, as it flows
From sinful lips, and wafting it above
Bring back the answer of a Saviour's love !

But peace was not for Aubrey ; he was young,
 Nor had his footsteps climbed that dizzy height,
Round which the veil that hope and fancy flung
 Showed in the golden distance rosy-bright
Ambition's sunrise, till his warm heart sprung
 And leaped within him, till the eagle's flight
Fearless and forward, seemed his chosen way,
The destined pathway that before him lay.

He owned the will and felt the power to rise,
That knowledge nursed and fanned the growing
fire,
And on a phantom fixed his longing eyes ;
He knew not that the tempter would retire,
And as his hands were raised to grasp the prize,
With new-born hopes her victim would inspire ;
Bright in the east the sun was shining yet,
He felt its power, and thought not it must set !

Like some green islet in an ocean bay,
Upon the bosom of a swelling mound,
Whereon the early sunbeams loved to play,
By a rich group of kingly chesnuts crowned,
A humble garden in its beauty lay,
With waving apple-orchards girt around ;
Small were the plots, but each was tilled with care ;
Few were the flowers, but not a weed was there.

The woods were flung around it, like a band
Of circling verdure, and upon the hill,
Flanked by two tiny plots of meadow land,
An ivied cottage stood, as calm and still,
As though some solitary hermit's hand
Had placed it there, half moated by a rill,
That lightly dancing through the sylvan glade
E'er wandered on, nor lingered while it played.

There as the first beams of the rising sun
Gave birth to toil, and broke the spell of rest ;
Or when, his daily course of duty run,
He sank, but not to sleep, behind the west ;
Not yet his work, not yet his labor done,
The woodman in his homely fustian dressed
Would fondly linger on his humble farm
And ply the spade with stout unflagging arm.

It was but little, but it was his all ;

There had he lived to toil, and toiled to live ;
As to the exiled son his father's hall,

'Twas dearer far than aught that life could give ;
Its simple pleasures never seemed to pall

Upon his heart ; Contentment bid him thrive :
And hallowing all God's loving mercy shed
Her choicest blessings on his aged head.

High o'er the mountains on an eagle wing

Young Aubrey's thoughts were soaring in their
pride ;

Contentment smiling on the birth of spring

Sat by that cottage door ; she could not guide
His roving steps, and yet she seemed to sing

So sweetly, that she lured him to her side ;
For on the margin of that woodland brook
He paused, entranced in one long lingering look !

Not on the tranquil stillness of the scene ;—

He knew each nook and corner of the wood ;—
That which in other moments might have been

A charm so powerful, in his present mood
Availed not, for a maiden on the green

In the first blush of youthful beauty stood,
Round whose fair shoulders in a golden stream
Waved ringlets, brighter in the morning beam.

She stood alone within that garden bower,

Joy of the home where she was born and bred,
And grew in grace and beauty hour by hour,

E'en as the apple-blossoms, which o'erspread
Her father's orchard, felt the sunbeam's power,

And changed from virgin white to blushing red ;
Scarce conscious of her beauty, laboring still
Her young life's humble duties to fulfil.

She'd lived so long among them, she had grown

Like to the flowers which beauty scattered round;

As if each blossom from the earth had flown

To grace her features, for the violet found

In her deep liquid eyes a fitting throne ;

And on her cheeks, by summer lightly browned,

The wild rose blushed, and saw reflected there

Her own pale image delicately fair.

In the low porch beside that cottage door

SYLVINA sat, and from a heart, that glowed

With Nature's music, songs of rustic lore

Or plaintive strains in broken snatches flowed ;

So one by one the full drops trickle o'er

The well-spring's moss-grown basin on the road ;

And Aubrey listened, for he knew the voice

Of music must in utterance rejoice.

(So once I lingered in a woody vale,

And through the spring leaves watched the
crimson dyes

That streaked the golden west, ere fresh and pale

The moon with maiden beauty lit the skies ;

And listened for the early nightingale,

The minstrel, as I thought, of plaintive sighs ;

And strove to catch amid the tuneful throng

The first faint breathing of her liquid song.

'Twas but a passing fancy ; still I sought,

As wrapped in poesy I roamed along,

To learn the lesson that each warbler taught,

And glean the burden of each minstrel's song ;

And as the cuckoo's wandering accents caught

Mine ear, I said, " That voice cannot belong

To aught save Pleasure, roaming through the air

On wanton wing triumphant over care."

The thrush half hidden in the elm above,
Nor wandering far from his beloved nest,
Poured forth his ceaseless tale of wedded love ;
The blackbird, though in dusky plumage dressed,
Sang lustily of joy ; the plaintive dove
Echoed the wail of some lone widow's breast ;
And in the landrail's hoarse discordant croak
A restless discontented spirit spoke.

When few survived of all the woodland choir,
A low voice stealing from a neighbouring bush,
Like the first breathing of a wind-rocked lyre,
Trilled a sad song, that swelled into a gush
Of joy's own music ; each note mounting higher
In strains so clear and thrilling, that the thrush
To his loved mate in silence shrunk at last,
And owned his own sweet minstrelsy surpassed.

They err who call thee Philomel the sad,
I know no minstrel of the feathered throng,
Who boasts one note of music half so glad ;
Though for a sympathising heart she long
Sorrow must weep in silence, or go mad,
While joy will revel in an endless song ;
As thy sweet voice born with the fading light
Thrills through the wood the livelong summer night.)

Sylvina's Song.

The young buds springing on the trees,
Each one beside his brother,
Wave in the violet-scented breeze,
And whisper to each other :
They nestle fondly side by side
The glowing summer weather,
And in the golden autumntide
They fade and fall together.

Together live,—together die,—
Together on the cold ground lie,
Or if one leaf survive a day,
To-morrow it will fade away !

Upon the wild rose of the wood,
When summer's torch is lighted,
There blooms a living sisterhood,
By Beauty's hand united :
Their snowy petals scent the air,
With blushing lines embraided,
And gently falls the dewy tear
O'er one untimely faded.

Together live,—together die,—
Together on the cold ground lie,
Or if one rose an hour delay,
'Tis but to weep and fade away.

Together down the gulf of time
Our mortal barks are flying,
But youth, and age, and manhood's prime,
His own stout oar is plying ;
For each one plays a selfish part,
And fills his ship with treasure,
Nor views with sympathising heart
A brother's scantier measure.

Together live,—together die,—
Together in the cold ground lie,
Who sees his friend at even fall
May hear at morn the trumpet-call !

Some mock at love, nor e'er believe
In hearts untimely broken ;
Some, when a word would save, will leave
That simple word unspoken ;

Some in the lap of pleasure lie,
 Their selfish souls regaling,
And view with cold unfeeling eye
 A fellow-creature's failing.

Together live,—together die,—
Together in the cold ground lie,
Thrice blessed the hearts, though few they be,
That own the power of sympathy !

Like to the carol of the wild wood bird

'T was sweet, yet what a contrast to the strain
Of hallowed music, which he lately heard ;

One softly, gently fell like summer rain
Upon his thirsty ear, the other stirred

Strange doubts within his soul and racked his
 brain ;

Across the stream that through the valley wound
He sprang, and stood beside her on the mound.

“ Judge not the world so harshly, maiden,” cried

The impetuous youth—she, like a startled fawn,
Shrunk from his ardent gaze and turned to hide

Her blushing cheeks, retreating down the lawn,
He lingered still conversing by her side ;

“ The blackest night may have a sunny dawn—
Cold though the world, each one may hope to find
Some kindred heart—some sweet congenial mind.”

He spoke in accents musically sweet,

Their very sweetness stayed the trembling tear ;
’T was not the language that was wont to greet,

In silvery tones, a village maiden’s ear,
And when she raised her timid eyes to meet

His own, in them she saw no cause of fear ;
And by his gentle courtesy beguiled
Spoke not indeed, but soft in answer smiled.

“ Is there some kindred feeling, welling low
In thy young heart, that thrills thy voice with
power ?

Some secret sorrow, or the natural flow

Of music, solacing a lonely hour ?

Say, dost thou weep at tales of others' woe,

O'er friendship blighted, like an autumn flower ?

Forgive me, but when all around was glad,

It touched my heart to hear a song so sad.”

Her lips were parting, when a hearty voice

Behind them stilled her answer in its birth,

“ A simple ballad, but her father's choice,

Too truly speaking to the sons of earth ;

Her own young spirit panteth to rejoice

In strains of melody and gladsome mirth,

But that lorn ditty she has trilled so long,

She 's learned to love her father's favorite song.”

He pressed one kiss upon her blushing face,

And gently drew her to his heaving side,

On that last relic of his lonesome race

A moment gazed in tenderness and pride ;

And then, as if her beauty-moulded grace

Had struck some hidden chord, he sadly sighed,

And heavenward looking breathed a silent prayer,

May angels shield that tender heart from care !

As in the prophet's parable of old,

Beloved and loving in his bosom lay

That one pet lamb that lingered in his fold ;

Her love shed forth its pure unselfish ray,

Unlike the miser's buried gleam of gold,

Beamed o'er his path and cheered his lonely way ;

Their lives fast bound in love's enduring tie,

Whose golden links or time or change defy.

For her he feared, for in his early days

He trusted once, and in that trust betrayed

Looked on the world as on a tangled maze,

Where seeming friendship with her victim played,
And young love roaming through her flowery ways

On beauty smiled, till it began to fade ;

Gazed on the youth, and as he scanned him o'er

Deemed that the wolf was lurking at his door.

Young Aubrey shrank not from that silent test,

But o'er his features beamed a placid smile,

Truth on his brow, in golden lines impressed,

Told that his spirit scorned the traitor's wile,
Reflecting there the image of his breast,

Unstable, weak, but free from wilful guile ;

The father marked his calm triumphant look,

And read his answer in that living book.

There was a glance in that dark eagle eye,
The trustful answer which the father sought ;
There was a pathos in that heartbreathed sigh,
Which told he would not wrong her by a thought ;
And in that soul a spirit that would fly
To meet e'en death, and dying would have fought
To save the victim from the hands of might,
Or fall a hero in the cause of right—

As when some wandering child of science spies,
Far from the brightness of a sunny glade,
A rare and unexpected floral prize,
Half hidden in the woodland's tangled shade,
And stands entranced in silent ecstasies ;
So looked young Aubrey on that rustic maid
With ardent gaze, yet uninspired by love—
The soaring eagle mates not with the dove.

It was not love, but wonderment akin
To admiration, that his heart impressed,
No wanton thought of passion or of sin
Burned in his glance or lingered in his breast—
They err, who dream of passion as the twin
Of deep pure love, which heaven itself has blessed ;
One, Godlike, lives immortal from its birth,
The other, earthly, wanes and dies on earth—

For what is Passion ? but the torrent flow
Of whirling rivers on their seaward way
Lost in their first embraces ; or the glow
Of noontide suns, which at the close of day
Powerless as moonbeams smiling upon snow
In pale and fitful glances dies away ;
In its hot life consuming heart and soul,
Itself consumed, whene'er it wins the goal.

But love—love rises from the funeral pyre
Of passion, jewelled with a purer light,
The sacred flame of Vesta's quenchless fire
Upon the heart's own altar burning bright,
The virgin music of a deathless lyre,
Which o'er life's spring and autumn's gathering
night
In hallowed strains of glowing rapture flows,
More sweet and swan-like as it nears the close.

She was the child of Nature—he who loved
The mother felt affection for the child;
What had his dream no dream of fancy proved,
And might he roam with her the forest wild,
His sister comrade wheresoe'er he moved
In his fair world, where only beauty smiled?
Knit to his heart by pure and secret ties,
Far from the world and its cold sympathies!

Swift through the cottage porch Sylvina passed,
O'er which festooning ivy wildly spread,
And bade young Aubrey share their rude repast—
Fresh virgin honey, milk, and barley bread ;
The old man, ere he broke his morning fast,
Took down the Book of Life and slowly read
The words of mercy, prefaced by a prayer,
That God would shield them with a father's care.

The strains of music, like the sweet south wind,
Fall on a heart that wakes to kindred chords,
The untutored ear a dearer charm will find
In the wild warbling of the woodland birds ;
And Aubrey doubted if the old man's mind
Drank in the import of his murmured words—
They were but words to Aubrey—but to him
Sweet as the sweetest songs of Cherubim.

Thus thought he, when upon the Sacred page

Through the dull lattice beamed a golden ray,

That played around the silvered locks of age,

Flooding the Book with light, and seemed to say—

“ To rich and poor, to simple as to sage

The heavenly light alone can point the way”—

The calm refulgence of the day-star bright

Alone dispel the mist of heathen night.

He listened as unto the moaning sea

At midnight breaking on the lonesome shore,

Instinct with life those precious words might be,

Words were they unto him—and nothing more ;

For man and not for God he bent his knee

In courteous silence on the sanded floor,

And marked with new-born feelings of surprise

The old man's trembling voice and tearful eyes.

“ What moves his heart so deeply ?” Aubrey said

Within himself, “ the weakness of his years ?

I’ve climbed to heights where others feared to tread,

Unsunned by hope and undismayed by fears,

Books of sublimest pathos have I read

Yet ne’er was moved to sympathising tears ;

What is there in those simple strains to fire

His inmost soul and every word inspire ?”

Here rested Faith, hands folded on the Book—

Eyes burning brighter as she neared the grave,

There Unbelief brow-bent with scornful look,

Like that proud noble, scowling on his slave,

Loth to confess in Israel’s healing brook

The injured honor of Abana’s wave ;

One pure and simple, as a new-born child,

The other unregenerate and wild—

Wild in his doctrine, if indeed he knew

Not what he taught, but what his heart professed;

Man might aver that this or that was true;

Till it was plain, his spirit could not rest;

When Reason faltered, doubts revived and grew

Like hydra-headed monsters in his breast;

Yet loved he when occasion gave a chance,

Careless with whom, to break a friendly lance.

“Believ’st thou what thou readest? I have fought

Against the doubts, which overcloud my mind;

Like heathen Pilate I have vainly sought

To trace out truth, unable yet to find

A reason for the faith I have been taught;

And if I asked for counsel, ’twas the blind

Leading the blind—I might as well have tried

To pile huge Ossa upon Pelion’s side.”

The old man softly to his daughter—" Go,
Spread now thy garments to the morning beam—"
" If thou wilt feed on poison, be it so !
Seek not to taint thy fellows ; let its stream
Through thine own veins in venom'd courses flow,
Feed thine own heart on its delusive dream,
I humbly thank my God that I believe,
I seek no more—for you I can but grieve."

" Faith is the anchor upon which you rest,
The safeguard of your soul ; what if the wind
Of earthly passion ruffle not your breast ?
If rending sorrow can a solace find ?
Let Reason be becalmed, she turns in quest
Of stronger proof to satisfy the mind ;
Whence comes this Faith ? whence springs its
mighty power
To soothe the anguish of a dying hour ?"

“ Here is your answer, writ in words of gold,
Speaking from Heaven above to man below ;
Clad in this armour sinners may be bold,
And hurl defiance at their deadliest foe ;
The Saviour fashioned in our mortal mould,
And linked to human suffering and woe,
Has traced His footsteps on its glowing page,
A beacon-light to each succeeding age.”

“ Let the Creator speak—let Nature show
Her living book, not writ by mortal man ;
The boundless ocean’s ceaseless ebb and flow—
Seasons revolving since the world began—
The blooming spring—the summer’s ruddy glow—
The cheery autumn—winter pale and wan ;
God is the arbiter of woe and joy,
Himself can save—Himself alone destroy.”

“ If meads bedecked with rainbow-tinted flowers,
If stars, like jewels flung upon the night,
If varying seasons—sunshine, storm or showers—
The ocean’s restless tide—the river’s flight—
If birds awaking from their leafy bowers
To greet the advent of returning light—
If these were all Creation, God might be
Naught but a stern, presiding Deity.

“ To them He speaks the word, and it is done ;
E’en as of old upon that cloud-capped hill,
That proudly overlooks fair Ajalon,
At Joshua’s word the sun and moon stood still ;
The ass obeyed rebuking Bosor’s son ;
But man endowed with reason and a will,
God’s noblest work and once in honor first,
By sin his own position has reversed.

“ God made the world, and saw that it was good ;
Man, though in God’s own image, made it vile ;
Man’s sin called down from heaven the vengeful
flood,
God’s goodness gave to Noah his floating isle ;
The host of saints and martyrs shed their blood,
Though round their lips played mercy’s loving
smile ;
So from the first—God working good for man—
Man turning good to evil where he can.”

“ If God permit the evil, who’s to blame ?
He is all-powerful, man is but a slave :
Freedom of will is but an empty name,
Prefigured from the cradle to the grave.
Our course is traced by Him ; we cannot frame,
Devise or execute ; destroy or save ;
If God foresee the future as the past,
Fixed is that future long as time shall last.

“Talk not of will ! can yon pale drooping flower
 Call forth a few glad drops of summer rain,
Or riven and blighted by the pelting shower
 Rise with the sun to life and hope again,
Prolong one moment of its destined hour,
 Or burst one link of Nature’s iron chain ?
What, can the restless spirit of the breeze
Pause in its course to wanton with the trees ?”

“There are recesses, black as blackest night
 In this wide wood, where stranger feet may roam ;
I by the pale beam of the fleeting light
 Can trace the narrow path, which leadeth home ;
E’en as the frail bark steers her onward flight
 By one bright star that gems the midnight dome ;
Clear is my course, you wander through the world
From doubt to doubt, from shoal to quicksand hurled.

“ Time warns me we must go—I to my task,
You to your wonted pleasures. Ere we part,
To meet it may be never ! I would ask
That you would ponder these things in your heart;
Or if you will come with me, you can bask
I’ the spring sun, and Nature will impart
New force to our discourses, may they be
Fraught with life-giving fruit to you and me !”

They wound around the summit of the hill,
Which overhung the cottage ; far and wide
The woods were rich with verdure, and the rill
Danced its wild dance adown the rocky side ;
While from the valley, else so calm and still,
Came the loud ring of axes stoutly plied,
And wood-nymphs shuddered when they heard the
knell
Of crashing timber as it earthward fell.

Leaving the path, they reached the fatal scene

Through the thick brushwood, as a giant oak

E'en in the death-pangs tottered ; fresh and green

The young buds trembled, as the measured stroke
Flashed in the golden sunlight ; sharp and keen

Blow followed blow, until its heart-strings broke,
Crushing its fellows in its headlong fall,
Like sightless Sampson in Philistia's hall.

There lay the mighty dead—a mangled row—

Their sturdy branches hewn and rent in twain—
Reft of their crowns ; a few brief suns ago

The stalwart monarchs of that woodland plain ;
Now fallen beneath the axe's murderous blow,

Like their own leaves before the autumn rain ;
On their own thrones, whilom their place of pride,
They perished, as they flourished, side by side.

Aubrey to the Oak.

“It may be thine in coming years to see

A gallant band swarming thy sheeted side,
To waft those hearts of oak, thou kindred tree,

Along the pathless ocean far and wide,
And hear the thrilling shout of victory

Roll o’er the bosom of the crimsoned tide ;
It may be thine to revel in the strife
Of storm and tempest, as in early life.

“But now thou liest, as many have lain of old,

In some far forest of the burning East
Where Death had left his victim stark and cold,
The whitening bones of some forgotten beast ;
Where clustering ants, by silence rendered bold,
Prolonged the moments of their dainty feast,
And lingered, loth to leave it even then—
As on thy boughs the busy hive of men.

“ And if that brilliant future be denied,
It may be thine to avenge the cruel blows,
Which laid thee powerless in thine hour of pride
And mocked thy misery ;—thou mayest enclose
The sturdy limbs which rend thy shattered side
And wrap in close embrace thy vanquished foes ;
What sweeter vengeance than this thought for thee,
That man—proud man—must one day nothing be?”

“ Not so : for these are fallen to rise no more !
In vain will summer woo a sapless stem ;
We go in search of loved ones gone before,
Faith beaming in our bosoms, like a gem
On spars of jet, which, as we reach the shore,
Shall brighten into glory's diadem ;
Oh ! what a world where Faith itself must die,
And Hope eclipsed fade in reality.

“ But rather thus : a few short weeks ago

I sought this dell ; the day was cold and wild ;
The brooklet's edge was fringed with flakes of snow ;

Spring wept sad tears, as o'er her first-born child
Waved bright Narcissus in his golden glow,

Then caught the breath of May and sweetly
smiled ;

For gaily dancing on the violet's bed
The harebell bloomed forgetful of the dead.

“ Day speedeth after day, year after year

Swells but the countless army of the dead ;
And laughs to scorn the sympathising tear,

Dewing the pall, which o'er the future spread
So closely veils from sight the funeral bier

Whereon we journey to our lonely bed,
We know not when the summons may have birth,
Which calls our lingering footsteps from the earth.

“ Fair though she be, the Angel’s icy breath
 May freeze the pulses of the maiden bride ;
The laughing child that twines his morning wreath
 Be snatched at even from his parent’s side ;
With silent blow the messenger of death
 May smite the hero in his hour of pride ;
Like winter, stealing on the autumn bowers,
He reaps with reckless scythe or fruits or flowers.

“ So pass the darlings of our youth away !
 New hopes, new pleasures charm our senses here !
Months roll unheeded onward, till the day
 It may be of their birth, or of the year,
Which once was welcomed as a holy-day
 Recalls their form and wakes the mindful tear ;
Or when the flowers they cherished upon earth
Reviving speak of their more glorious birth.

“What though their leaves whirled on the fitful gust
Join the wild dance of death at summer’s wane,
Or under-trodden slowly turn to dust ?

Revived and strengthened by the autumn rain
Their roots repose in sure and certain trust
That spring will raise them up to life again ;
So in the grave our clay-cold bodies lie
Waiting to join the immortal soul on high.”

“What if the spirit of the mighty dead
Can wend a heavenward course and roaming wide
Leave the dull body in its earthy bed ?

What if the heart of that proud youth who sighed
For other worlds to conquer, quickly spread
Its new-born wings of glory—lived and died
With Cæsar in the Senate-house of Rome ?
Nor finding in his cruel grave a home

“ Saw Lodi’s bridge inspire Ambition’s dream,
 Wrote on the Pyramids a deathless fame,
Swept all before it, as a mountain stream
 Let loose on golden valleys, as the flame
Chance-kindled grows into the lurid gleam
 Of burning forests ;—till the Conqueror’s name
Bowed Europe’s haughty neck—then sank to rest
Upon Saint Helen’s uncongenial breast

“ To rise again :—but be this as it may,
 Be we the sons of darkness or of light,
E’en from the womb prefigured is the way
 Which all must tread, though hidden from the
 sight ;
Clouded or clear the swiftly-speeding day
 Must fall at even in the arms of night ;
So o’er thy bark, on faithless billows tossed,
Closes the wave, if destined to be lost.”

They reached the open fields—the fragrant breath
Of spring sighed softly round them ;—through
the air

Rang a wild cry of agony and death—

A sharp shrill cry in accents of despair ;
Each looked on other—on the stream beneath,
An upturned skiff was floating calmly there :—
One cry :—and then the silence of the grave :—
A dim, dark object floating on the wave

Hither and thither on the swollen flood,
Like tangled seaweed on the heaving tide,
Or mastless vessel's floundering hulk of wood—
A brave young heart that would have nobly died
On crimson fields and gladly shed its blood,
But shuddered at the mill-gate gaping wide ;
With arms thrice raised to Heaven he slowly sank ;
When Aubrey darted from the shelving bank,

Swift as an arrow, bounding from a bow,

Bold as a lion, reckless as the wind,

Cleft the fell stream and in its underflow

Grasped a huge form, within whose darkened
mind

Despair was rife, and blind to friend or foe

His struggling limbs so closely intertwined
Round his preserver, that they sank beneath,
Each battling with his fellow—both with death.

Again they rose, and Aubrey vainly strove

To free his prisoned arm ; a floating oar
Lay in his very grasp, he could not move,

A film came o'er his eyes—he knew no more—
He heard sweet voices murmuring of love—

Vague dreams—strange visions of a golden
shore—

So still—so calm—he might have sank to rest,
Pillowed in love upon a maiden's breast.

And then a shapeless, low-roofed, modest room—

Clean but unpapered walls—a curtained bed—

A climbing rose, proud of its early bloom,

Waving through window bars its fragrant head—

Within his waking mind a conscious gloom

Of things unknown or unrememberèd ;

A second birth, where each one born again

In his own person bears the travail-pain.

He woke to consciousness—he knew not where—

A fair young girl was watching by his bed,

Or softly rising from her shrouded chair

Wiped the damp dew-drops from his fevered head;

Till by his side a low-breathed solemn prayer

For one but lately numbered with the dead

Burst the dark spell, and bade his heart rejoice

To hear once more the woodman's friendly voice.

CANTO II.

The Storm.

C A N T O I I.

The Storm.

Far northward in a heath-embroidered chase,
 Fashioned by Nature in her wildest mood,
Where high-bred youngsters breathed their maiden
 race,
 Upon the hills an ivied castle stood ;
A silvery river laved its rocky base,
 Girt by dense lines of overhanging wood ;
An oaken avenue in triple rank
Led from the mansion to the river-bank ;—

Crossed o'er the stream and through the daisied
meads,

Veiled in its deepening shade the rustic mill,

A moment lost amid the clustering heads

Of kindred trees, that crowned the neighbouring
hill,

Through the red fallows, by milk-breathing sheds,

Breasting the uplands, marching onward still,

Passed in the hazy distance out of sight,—

Ten miles in length and ten from left to right.

The leaders towered above the ancient hall,—

The home, wherein their feudal lords had birth ;

Welcomed the young heir, wept the old man's fall,

Sighed in the death-wail, hailed the strains of mirth ;

The rear-guard flung a light and shadowy pall

O'er their last resting place in sacred earth ;

The verdant carpet underneath them spread

E'en from the cradle to the graveyard led.

No tree less noble dared to intertwine
Plebeian branches with the kingly oak ;
Sacred they stood in one unbroken line,
As if in answer to the woodman's stroke
They would have shed rich drops of ruby wine,—
A silent echo of the voice that spoke
In that proud motto, blazoned on the shield,
“ *Die break but bend not ; die but never yield.* ”

The early promise of the blushing spring
Bore richer fruit in summer's riper arms ;
Bride-like of blessings she might faintly sing,
That lent new beauty to the mother's charms,
And fondly fancy that her seed would bring
A golden honor to the waving farms ;
It was her lot to raise,—another reared
The child for which she hoped, for which she feared :

In the fresh dews of morning Aubrey rode
 Along the green lanes on a chesnut steed ;
A nobler creature rarely man bestrode,
 Born from a sire and dam of purest breed ;
And his glad thoughts in lightsome fancies flowed
 Fresh from a heart from care and sorrow freed ;
His heart still lighter and his eye more bright,
As each familiar object hove in sight.

Returning homeward from the winding Wye,—
 Where moss-grown Tintern mourns her ruined
 nave ;
Where proud Plinlimmon towering to the sky
 Flings from her rocky womb the sister wave,—
The kindred streams through distant counties fly
 To join their waters, ere they reach their grave ;
So youthful lovers, shoals and quicksands past,
Meet in the haven of their hopes at last ;—

He came unlooked for : but for him there breathed
A hearty welcome in each stalwart tree,
Beneath whose shade his tiny hands unsheathed
The falling acorns in his childish glee ;
And through their branches closely interwreathed
Affection strained a longing eye to see
The mother's glowing cheek, the father's pride
As stood once more the firstborn by their side.

The sunbeam plays upon the eddying stream,
Tinging each wavelet with a varied glow,
E'en though the brightness of his midday beam
Pierce not the darkness of its underflow ;
So youth lies basking in a summer dream,
Which nursed in happiness awakes in woe,
For Hope and Fancy fling around the morn
Visions of beauty which may ne'er be born.

One short half hour—and on his father's hall

He marked the glad beam of the morning light ;
Silence was there, as when day's murky pall

Spreads o'er the heaven the gloom of starless
night ;

Then glancing slowly upward at the wall

The death-drawn curtains met his aching sight :
Fear strove with hope, but as he touched the bell
Hope shrieked as though she heard her funeral knell.

He asked no sign, though in his quivering heart

Throbbled the wild pulses of foreboding fear ;
He glanced around, but servants slunk apart,

Or feigned indifference, as he drew near ;
What need of studied language to impart

The fatal tidings ? Death was seated there !
“ Where is my father ? ” from his full heart broke
In low-breathed tones, that scarce an echo woke.

Ah ! where ? the barbèd iron of that blow
Entered his soul, yet not a tear he shed ;
Tears cannot gauge the depths of human woe,
They weep the living, silence mourns the dead ;
So when misfortune laid the patriarch low,
His faithful friends though watching by his bed
Spoke not of comfort, for they knew that grief
Finds not in loud-toned sympathy relief.

The sapling springs elastic from the tread,
Bruised but not broken by the wanderer's foot ;
The fading flow'ret rises from its bed,
As flow the freshening raindrops to its root ;
The bloodless oakbranch withers overhead ;
Drops earthward silently the ripened fruit ;
So sink the old beneath the iron heel
Of sorrow, which the young but lightly feel.

Slowly through Nature's grand cathedral aisle

In muffled silence wound the funeral train ;

His trusty tenants, ranged in double file,

Bore him by turns along the heathy plain

To God's own acre and the sacred pile

From man's proud mansion and his broad
domain,—

To that dark home beside the kindred earth

Of long-lost mouldering forms that gave him birth.

A solitary mourner walked behind

With heavy heart, but busy thoughts at play

Culled strangest fancies, fitful as the wind

That breathes sweet odors through an autumn day,

One moment calling on a serious mind

To solve grave doubts, then flinging care away

Counting the shadows, which the oak trees cast

On the green carpet over which they passed.

Strange is it that in hours of speechless woe,
 When the torn heart convulsed with agony
Longs for an earthly peace it may not know,
 Men count the very moments as they fly,
And brood o'er idle fancies as they flow,
 And sorrow lost in its intensity
Counts e'en the nails upon the coffin lid
Wherein the darling of their youth lies hid.

In lingering echoes tolled the funeral bell
 Its warning death-note ; as the bearer's feet
Touched hallowed ground, its sad and solemn knell
 Changed to a ring of music softly sweet ;
Sorrow and pain had wept their long farewell,
 And pealed the joybells merrily to greet
The old man's entrance to that calm abode
To rest in peace, as slept his soul in God.

The white-robed minister with trembling voice
 Stood book in hand above the yawning grave,
And bade the living and the dead rejoice,
 For Christ had died and risen their souls to save,
That all who made in life the wiser choice
 Might win through love the crown which mercy
 gave ;
And Aubrey listened, though his stricken head
Bowed down with anguish gazed upon the dead.

'Twas something that within his father's halls
 The form still rested on its nightly bed ;
One tie yet lingered in the sacred walls
 Unbroken, till the solemn prayers were read ;
But when they drew aside the funeral palls
 And careless hands unrobed the precious dead,
When dust met dust, and earth on earth was tossed,
Then Aubrey felt that all indeed was lost—

All lost for him !—the last frail link was riven,
That bound the living to the senseless clay ;
Faith would have raised a loving eye to Heaven,
And blessed the hand that gave and took away :
Enough for him ! an endless cloud was driven
Across the sunlight of his early day ;
So spoke not—wept not—as the rising grave
Closed o'er the form he would have died to save.

Cold is the outer world, when suffering fills
The human heart, as winter scattering snow
On the bleak ridges of the northern hills,
That blushed but lately in the purple glow
Of clustering heather ; though the prisoned rills
Lie bound in icy fetters, coursing low
A pure stream trickles silently along
Fresh from its parent stream, though hushed its song.

So in the heart there lurks a secret spring

Of pure deep feeling, steeped perchance in pride,
Icebound with worldliness, that loves to fling

Its blighting baneful fruits on every side,
Or lost in self, whene'er the wanton wing

Of pleasure plays upon the surging tide
Of human passion,—crimsoned with the stain
That marks the progress of Ambition's reign.

That spring through changing seasons ebbs and flows,

Fickle as ocean's self, in early years

Flooding the golden sands ; though rocks oppose

The swelling wave, when manhood's hopes and
fears

Engage the heart ; though warned of speedy close

Old age be prone alike to smiles or tears ;

It looks to love and owns her magic sway,

As restless seas the growing moon obey.

And what more powerful, when we strive to brace
Our hearts to seeming coldness, than to see
The seal of woe upon a mother's face,
Impressed in lines of tell-tale agony,
That long long years alone can e'er erase
And then not leave her as she used to be !
Grazing our flesh the iron-pointed dart
In poison steeped will pierce a mother's heart.

Sweet is the freshening dew, that falls betimes
Through the soft twilight of the morning beams
Upon the honeyed leaves of clustered limes ;
Sweet is the murmur of the woodland streams ;
And sweet the music of the Sunday chimes
Waking the sluggard heart from selfish dreams ;
But sweeter far upon the midnight air
The hallowed incense of a mother's prayer.

Noble the youth, who for his country dies

In silent anguish on the reeking plains ;

Noble the love, that with unshrinking eyes

From the red wound the festering poison drains ;

Noble the heart that dares to sacrifice

In friendship's cause the lifeblood from its veins ;

But nobler far the mother's daily strife

For those she loves, that ends but with her life.

The white-winged fleet far stretching out to sea,

The serried order of the battle line,

The summer flowers that on the waving lea

Their varied tints of beauty intertwine,

The golden fruit upon the bending tree,

Are fair to view, but not so fair as thine,

O form almost divine, O love intense,

Watching in prayer o'er infant innocence.

'True to the North the constant needle flies,

True to her buried mate the widowed dove,

'True to his faith the Christian martyr dies ;—

Enough ! if fancy range through heaven above,
And ransack earth, nor earth nor heaven supplies.

The fitting emblem of a mother's love,
'Tender, unselfish, constant, pure, as when
Rejoicing angels greet repentant men.

And yet how ill requited ! sorrow rears

Her giant form above the funeral pall,
And glancing upward through the blistering tears

Of vain regret, that slowly sadly fall,
Would gladly give the hopes of unborn years

For one brief fleeting moment to recall
One cold harsh word, one frensied hour of strife,
In death remembered, though unknown in life.

He who hath stood upon the burning wreck,
Round which the wind-rocked billows madly rave,
When each spar shivered from the bursting deck
Brings him but one foot nearer to his grave,
When hope shines dimly, as a distant speck
On the white bosom of the surging wave,
Alone can picture, though he may not know
The hopeless anguish of that hour of woe.

Could we but learn to love the flowers that grow
In bright-eyed beauty by the dusty way,
Although the debt men to their mothers owe
Affection's longest life could ill repay,
And naught could cancel, still our lives would show
A fairer balance at His judgment day,
Who on the verge of yielding up the ghost
Gave her He loved to him He trusted most.

The dark-limbed pine struck by the whirling gale
By props supported rears aloft its head ;
An oaken staff, when strength begins to fail,
Sustains the tottering limbs and aged tread ;
And sorrow when she hears the plaintive tale
Of blighted hopes and joys for ever fled,
Herself too weak to wrestle with the foe
Yearns for some kindred heart to share her woe,—

Something to love ;—and so when Aubrey flung
His arms around his mother, o'er her face
Gathered the cloud of grief, and tears that hung
E'en on the verge of weeping flowed apace ;
Firm as the ivy to the oak she clung,
For all she loved was clasped in that embrace,
And through her tears serenely softly smiled,
As lived once more the father in the child.

Out of the strong came sweetness ; out of death,

Itself so calm and still, ariseth strife ;

What ? do the closing eyes and failing breath

Bring naught but tears to parent, children, wife ?

Or sudden thoughts, soon as the funeral wreath

Crowns the belovèd dead, start into life ?

The immortal soul soars upward on the wind ;—

An earthly heritage remains behind.

It was not so with them : for hand in hand,

Each on the other resting, heart on heart,

They sate and whispered ; sometimes fondly planned

Their future life, resolved no more to part ;

As shipwrecked mariners in search of land

With anxious eyes bend o'er the outstretched chart,

Mapped out their course, unconscious that the ray

Of dawning hope was leading them astray.

In vain they planned ; 'twas predisposed by fate,

Their home of love was built upon the sand :

Repentance came, but came, alas ! too late

To save his waning fortunes ; house and land

Passed to a stranger, neither love nor hate

But stern constraint impelled the father's hand ;

The stainless parchments duly signed and sealed .

The altered prospects of their life revealed.

And then came visions, dark and ill-defined,

Of failing fortune breeding failing health,

Of tottering reason, speculation blind

And powerless to restore the squandered wealth ;

And then—a ghastly spectre on the wind—

The poisoned phial bought and drained by stealth,

The last o'erwhelming shock, the whispered breath

Of rumour, overshadowing his death.

He flung it from him, as a monstrous dream
That seizes on the senses—of a fall
From cloud-capped heights into a pitchy stream
Through fields of space, where silence mocks the
call,—

The stifled cry for aid, and waters seem
To engulf their victim, and oblivion's pall
Spreads o'er the scene, until the dawning light
Of reason steals upon the shades of night.

He flung it from him, as the Apostle cast
The viper from his hand, but not in faith—
Into his veins the burning venom passed,
And oft in after years the spectral wraith,
Like to the spirit of the scorching blast
Sweeping o'er arid wastes, beset his path,
And smiled in calm derision on his pride,
Blood-written on its brow—THE SUICIDE.

It was not for himself that Aubrey feared,
Each galling blow his resolution spurred,
The fresh young fire of independence seared
The wound, and independence he preferred
To golden columns by his fathers reared,
Hope softly whispered, if he would but gird
His armour round him for the war of life,
Success would hail him victor in the strife.

Thus when excitement glowed in fevered power
He thought, believed, and purposed ; but again
His purpose slept, as sleeps the closing flower
Within its folded leaves in thunder-rain ;
For man's proud spirit with the changing hour
Revives and faints, as on the distant plain
But lately moaning through the rustling trees
Dies but to rise again the fitful breeze.

But now with him must wander far and wide
His mother, as of old the guilty pair ;
She dreamed not of the strongly ebbing tide
Of their once happy fortunes,—that her heir
Bore his dead father's name and naught beside ;
Or that the home they fondly hoped to share
Was theirs no longer,—that the rising scene
Displayed what was and not what might have been.

Calmly she looked upon the coming change,
As simple noble-hearted woman will,
I mean not those, whose mind's sublimest range
Lights on their neighbour's converse good or ill ;
Whose chief delight consists in something strange,
Converted into something stranger still ;
But her, whose life reproves the legend song
Of woman weak and manhood only strong.

Strong in her mental power she leaves behind

The halting schools of slow philosophy ;

Propose a sudden subject, she will find

A cause for each effect, ere man apply

One half the tests of science ; from her mind

The well-poised arrows swiftly, surely fly

Straight to the mark, as to the noonday light

The soaring eagle's calm unswerving flight.

Yet stronger in endurance ;—she will bear

The loss of wealth or honor, all but fame ;

Though sorrow load her stricken heart with care,

That stigma only rests upon her name ;

Her active spirit flings away despair,

And kindles life anew at love's own flame ;

Such is true woman's nature, she will rise

From each misfortune nearer to the skies.

Her lamp of life was failing ;—in the west

She saw her sun declining, but his ray

Though dying, smiled upon a peaceful breast,

Till she remembered that a desert lay

Before her son ;—that when she was at rest

He still must tread alone the rugged way ;

Hope looked upon the future, and aghast

Turned back her lingering glances on the past.

How sweetly smiled the mother's eye to greet

Each tiny outburst of his infant joy ;

How lightly tripped the mother's foot to greet

On a soft summer eve her truant boy

Laden with flags and tufted meadow-sweet ;

That was the golden age without alloy ;

Then loving Hope designs and Fancy rears

Castles of magic size for coming years.

Love played with rainbow colors ; Fancy drew
Still brighter pictures, as the day advanced ;
Within his reach the immortelle chaplet grew,
Above his head the crown of glory danced ;
Full in his sight Ambition's standard flew,
And Honor like a wandering sunbeam glanced
Around his path, in that fond mother's eyes
A golden ladder leading to the skies.

So time passed on : years chased the flying years,
Snow veiled the sunlight,—sunlight drank the
snow,—
Her love-built temple still the mother rears,
Silver-tongued rumours wander to and fro ;
Ere hope could listen to the voice of fear,
Burst forth that sudden avalanche of woe,
Disgorging ruin on his luckless head,
Like angry torrents from a mountain bed.

'Twas better thus at once, than day by day
To watch with hopeless eyes and fearful mind
Her fond hopes fading one by one away,
And borne like autumn leaves upon the wind ;
Sad contrast to the joys of early May,
When their young buds in beauty intertwined !
'Twas better that the fatal sword should fall
Than hang suspended in a festive hall.

Could Fame be his within the solemn walls,
That ermined Justice for their mistress own ?
Could Honor crown him in the gilded halls,
Where statesmen gather round a kingly throne ?
Not even win the sable funeral palls
By Glory o'er her chosen warrior thrown ?
Poor, friendless mortal ! wouldst thou seek to rise
Alone—unaided—to the sunlit skies ?

One hope survived,—one path lay open still,
O'erlaid with jewels in the mother's eyes ;
Could she but mould Ambition to her will,
And frame him to her purpose, he might rise
From those proud thoughts that bound him earth-
ward, till
Faith bade him fix his hopes beyond the skies,
And leading others might himself be led
To track the footsteps of the holy dead.

She called him to her, gently calmly spoke
In glowing tones, that, kindled from above,
A new-born spirit in her heart awoke ;
“ Kiss thou the rod, that chastened but in love,
Obey the voice, that in true mercy spoke,
His arm will guide us wheresoe'er we move ;
Devote thy life to Him, and strive to be
A faithful servant of His Ministry.”

She spoke not vainly, nor unworldly wise,
One fleeting cloud obscured that heaven-born ray,
Affection blinds a doating mother's eyes,
'Twas in her power to help him on his way,
And love must plead for duty's sacrifice ;
'Twas in her gift and at no distant day
If bound by love to that eternal Rock
He might be Shepherd of a Christian flock.

If from her hidden bulwark fate had cast
A burning shell before him,—if the breeze
Had grown that moment to a tempest blast
And whirled the shivered fragments of the trees
In wildest ruin round him thick and fast,
As in those golden isles beyond the seas ;
No greater horror could have seized his mind.
Than when his mother's purpose he divined.

Hot words were bursting from him, and his breast
Heaved with a strange emotion, when his eye,
Fired with unwonted feeling, chanced to rest
Upon her sable robes ; a tear—a sigh
Drove back the tide of passion ill-repressed
On his own heart, and bade him quickly fly
To some dark secret solitude and there
Let loose its torrent on the voiceless air.

One brief unguarded moment may betray
The secret of a life ; the word that flies
From thoughtless lips into the light of day
Falls on some listening ear and never dies ;
If Aubrey had not checked the words that lay,
E'en from his very lips prepared to rise,
That instant to the mother had revealed
What long, long years had carefully concealed.

She must not know the creed his heart professed,—

 If creed it may be called,—the doubts, the fears,
Which bird-like flitted to and from his breast

 Would mar the peace of her declining years ;
The calm contentment of a soul at rest,

 The love that upward glancing smiled through
 tears,

The fruits of lively faith reflected there,

He almost envied, though he would not share.

Somewhat of truth in error mainly lies,

 Somewhat of bitterness in all things sweet,
Somewhat of light in darkness ; in the skies

 Glimmers the dawn, ere night and morning meet ;
So Aubrey's fear—the mother might despise,—

 Could she know all,—the son she loved to greet,—
Was but a feeling near akin to shame
For that once worshipped—now dishonored Name.

The mother looks upon her eldest child,

When brothers cluster round him, as the spring
Upon her firstling flower with hope beguiled,

That coming months will brighter blossoms bring;
On her sole relic, as the autumn wild

On the last leaves, that tremulously cling
To their lorn boughs, in fear lest envious fate
By one fell stroke should leave her desolate.

He was her only hope,—her joy,—her stay,—

The one loved being left to her on earth,—
She never felt how dear, until the day,—

That mournful day,—which ushered in the birth
Of her new life ; his childhood's merry play,

The careless laughter of his boyish mirth
Twined round her heart, but when his father died
Death knit the son more closely to her side.

She knew his ardent nature,—hence her fear,—

She knew his strength of purpose,—hence her
pride,—

He would have gladly lived a brief career

Of fame and glory, gladly would have died
’Mid heaps of slain, or been the first to rear

The trembling standard on the rampart side ;
No voice more powerful and no sword more keen
In service of his country and his Queen.

But when she bade him serve a higher King,

And seek a better country than the land
Where all is fleeting ; warned him that to sing
One chorus-song of praise at His right hand
Outshone all glory borne upon the wing

Of earthly fame, he could not understand ;
He looked upon this world as all in all,—
On each one fallen as foredoomed to fall.

Her children fading one by one away

Slept by their father's side beneath the sod,

That swelled in grassy mounds ; day after day

Nearer the grave her faltering footsteps trod ;

He was the sole companion of her way,

And him she wished to dedicate to God,

Pure and unselfish would have been her joy

Though mortal-mingled with the world's alloy.

She marked the glance that for an instant burned

In his dark flashing eye, yet would not dare

To trust itself in words, and when he turned

To leave the room, his stern defiant air

In silent anger her proposal spurned ;

Upon her knees she sank in trustful prayer,

That God in mercy would direct her son,

Yet humbly pleading " Let Thy will be done ! "

The Mother's Prayer.

Farther, my God, far from this world of selfish
care

Lift up my soul to Thee ;

Let not my fickle heart fly wandering here and
there,

And mock the voice of prayer,

Which rises from my lips unmeaningly !

May love-lit faith burn brightly, as the sun at
noon,

Hope like the herald star

Lead up my thoughts to Thee as to the rising
moon,

That pales her light too soon,

The countless fires that glimmer from afar.

E'en as Thy Virgin Mother weeping by the
Cross,
Bowed down with sudden pain,
Counting at that dread hour all earthly things as
dross,
Though mourning o'er her loss,
By faith beheld her Saviour rise again :

So may this heart inspired though widowed and
forlorn,
Owning Thy power to save,
Behold the dear one from her lonely bosom
torn
By death to glory borne,—
That bright eternal land beyond the grave.

Of old an aged mother in Thy favored
land,

Proud of her first-born son,
Prayed that within Thy holy temple he might
stand,

And guided by Thy hand
His course of duty in Thy service run.

My children like a night-dream from my sight
are flown,

I grudge them not to Thee !
One only son remains : my God make him Thine
own

To stand before Thy throne
The faithful servant of Thy ministry !

A storm sweeps o'er the earth ; a sudden shower
Scatters the fragrant blossoms on the plain,
But hope reviving bids the woodland flower,
Robbed of its beauty by the blighting rain,
Woo the glad sun, and quickened by the power
Of his returning beam, bud forth again :
E'en as the soul which bows itself in prayer
Finds a rich store of love and comfort there.

As when the giant pine, that lately frowned
Above the beetling crag, uprooted lies
Flapping its powerless branches on the ground ;
As when the monarch of the woodland dies,
And fills the forest with an empty sound,
For naught but echo to his voice replies ;
So Aubrey's disappointed spirit pined
Venting its angry feelings to the wind.

“ Must I then writhing on the speeding wheel

Endure the torments of a fabled Hell

Ixion bound on earth ? must I conceal

My face behind a mask, content to swell

The countless host of hypocrites and feel

My life one living falsehood ? sound the knell

Of my own hopes and with a feignèd voice

Hapless myself bid hapless men rejoice ?

“ Better a dungeon or the desert sand,

Or some lone island rock, than thus to bind

The reason captive ; better thrust my hand

And feet into the stocks and lie confined

In some foul prison of a foreign land,

Than that eternal bondage of the mind !

Who would not rather fester in his grave,

Than live for ever as a shackled slave ?

“ Perish the thought at once ! it would not shield

My heart from self-reproach, if I were fed
On royal food ; far better in the fields

With honest labour earn my daily bread,
And take the sustenance which Nature yields,
Than sell my conscience and be blindly led
To speak of hopes I never can receive
And preach a doctrine which I disbelieve.

“ A fearless heart,—a firm unflinching mind
And settled purpose win the highest place
In life’s grand contest ; cowards glance behind,
True courage looks the danger in the face ;
A horse may boast the fleetness of the wind,
Yet, if he lack endurance, lose the race ;
And perseverance, though opposed by fame,
Wins for itself an honorable name.

“Am I not free to choose my own career?

Let will and resolution hand in hand

Go forth and rend the ties which once were dear;

Success awaits me in a distant land,

Where I——but can I leave my mother here

Widowed—alone—unaided—to withstand

The ills of poverty—the woes of life—

And battle single-handed with the strife.”

E'en at that thought his features lighter grew,

There breathed a gentler spirit in his breast,

Back to the days of childhood memory flew,

Like some lone bird that seeks a summer nest,

And from the past unfolded to his view

Visions of happiness content and rest

They were but shadows called upon to pass

A brief existence on the conjuror's glass.

He saw her in her beauty when the rose
Mantled the cheek that now was wan and pale.
He saw the group of bright-eyed children close
Around her knees to hear the nightly tale,
The sad recital of their infant woes,—
The kiss of comfort which could never fail,—
He saw her now of children—home—bereft ;—
All gone before and he alone was left.

So on the widowed heart soft music falls
And to the lonely bosom wins its way ;
From the far dreamland of the past recalls
The lost companion of life's early day ;
The sweet though sad remembrance disenthalls
The heart from selfish musing and the lay
Seems sweeter, for the music is his own,
Though but an echo of its former tone.

Love with Ambition strove day after day ;
Repugnance waned but only to increase,
Yet still he sought to interpose delay,
If he might gain some unforeseen release ;
Love pleaded—counselled him to choose the way,
That leads to realms of everlasting peace ;
E'en love prevailed not, till a stern ally
Rose in the person of Necessity.

“ I would,” he cried, “ that fortune’s speeding wheel
Had given one other turn :—it may not be :
Thus my devotion by my life I seal,
Resign my hopes, dear mother, unto thee :
I fear not for myself ; I simply feel
That man can not resist his destiny ;
The sacrifice of duty and of love
Will be accepted by the God above.

“ Her lot is linked to mine : with her I stay
Till Death divide our hearts : I must awake
From idle dreams and tread my destined way ;
All rivers fall into the boundless lake
No matter when or where : I must repay
All that she bore and suffered for my sake ;
Unite a threefold character in one,
And be at once her father—husband—son !

“ What ? if a marble monument I stand,
Recording virtues which I do not know ;
A wayside guidepost pointing with my hand
The beaten track I never wish to go ?
If but my flock will seek the happy land
My own strict life shall an example show ;
If they but wish to lead a moral life
Pure from all stain of guilt and free from strife.

“ How many binding conscience to their will

By word or precept not example teach !

Some undertake these duties to fulfil,

Because preferment lies within their reach ;

And why not I ? my God I'll worship still

And will not practice, though I'm bound to
preach ;

From man's to God's own temple will repair

And serve the mighty Lord of Nature there.”

CANTO III.

The Earthquake.

CANTO III.

The Earthquake.

'Twas early morning, and the dying year

Lay at its latest gasp, worn out and old ;

Upon the hedgerows gleamed the frosted tear ;

The snow-wreathed trees stood motionless and
cold

In the lone woods ; the air was keen and clear ;

The earth fresh robed in white ; the dreary wold

In silence shivered, not a whisper heard,

Save the lorn twitter of a winter bird.

The sparrows clustered on the shelving eaves,
Each to his fellow nestling, friend to foe,
Like huddled heaps of brown and withered leaves,
Half buried in the swathes of swelling snow,
And looking with the eyes of wistful thieves
Upon the tempting crumbs that lay below ;
Longing to taste yet daring not to steal
One speck of favored robin's morning meal.

The year lay dying ;—bright days of his own
With conscious pride he had bequeathed to earth,
Or reaped the fruits which other years had sown,
Or heard the voice of gratitude and mirth,
When from the cottage,—from the kingly throne,—
Rose up the tribute to departed worth ;
In turn remembered, as they fled by,
Days—men—events—which never more can die.

Though month by month fresh laurels crowned his
brow,

They faded in the records of the past ;

Though strains of sweetest music seemed to flow

From his young lips, they died upon the blast ;

Round his hoar locks there shone a brighter glow,

The sweetest carol lingered to the last ;

The Day of days,—the happy Christmas morn,

On which the Saviour of the world was born.

Hark ! through the stillness of the morning air

The bells' rich music echoes through the grove :

Sinners awake ! and to His courts repair

To hear the ever-living tale of love ;

The new-born Christ is celebrated there,

Mercy's own message glimmers from above ;

The Angels' herald-song repeats again

“ Glory to God, goodwill and peace to men.”

List to those distant strains ! from door to door

The village children raise the song of joy ;

From gilded hall to sanded cottage floor

One theme—one Glorious Name all thoughts
employ ;

Would that our voices breathed the treasure-store

Of the heart's love—that gold without alloy !

Would that our lives endeavoured to express

The Faith—the Hope—the Love our lips profess.

The Christmas Carol.

Hail ! thou thrice favored morn,

On which the Lord of life was born,

From God's right hand He came ;

Upon the Cross displayed His power to save,

And from the lowly cradle to the grave

Himself a ransom for all sinners gave.

And Wonderful His Name !

Hail ! thou bright-beaming day,
When in the humble manger lay
The infant Governor !
Who in the early ages of the world
Saw our first parents from their Eden hurled,
And on this day Salvation's flag unfurled,
The mighty Counsellor !

Hail ! orbs of starry light,
Who on this angel-haunted night
Welcomed the Mighty God !
Who left His sceptre by His Father's side,
Came down to earth to win His chosen bride,
And from repentant sinners turn aside
The stern uplifted rod.

Father ! to Thee we pray,
On this all-hallowed happy day
Look down upon His Bride,
Who came coequal with Thy glory still,
In meek obedience to a Father's will,
To purify an erring world from sin
With blood-drops from His side.

Hail ! sun of golden ray,
Who on the Prince of Peace to-day
Thy beams of beauty poured :
Peace on this earth His new-born spirit
breathed,
Peace round the Cross His loving mercy
wreathed,
Peace with His latest blessing He bequeathed
To all who love their Lord.

Such were the notes, that tremulously fell
On Aubrey's listless ear that Christmas morn,
When every joy-bell sounded but the knell
Of proud Ambition : oh ! that he was born
Of his own will to weep the last farewell
O'er honor from his brow so rudely torn ;
When life that should a Paradise have been
Seemed to his fancy but a desert scene.

He should have passed that morn in silent prayer,
That night in solemn fasting,—should have
thrown
Himself before his God and prostrate there
Bade his proud heart its sinful follies own ;
Then as the bird into the sunny air
That from its prisoned cage has blithely flown,
He would have felt his spirit soar on high,
Lighter and lighter as the hour drew nigh.

Not only thus :—but weeks and months ago

He should have bowed and rent his stubborn
heart ;

Straight to the haven fixed his wavering prow

And steered his course by that unerring chart,
Till hopes of earth and heaven began to flow

In diverse channels, as when rivers part ;
Till the first sprouting of the heaven-born grain
Showed him that those who ask, ask not in vain.

He wandered round the old Cathedral close,

Whose triple spire, far-seen from distant hills,
Queenlike among her sister churches rose ;

And Thought fled back to seek the prattling rill,
Or watch the crimson-tinted sunset glows

That lingered round the quaintly-gabled mill.
The willow-haunted stream by whose dear side
He held sweet converse with his spirit-bride.

He felt as those who from an early love
Long-parted find themselves upon the brink
Of hated wedlock ;—chains which fancy wove
In by-gone years fall slowly link from link,
Though Duty raise her iron hand above
The past, and bid its maddened memories sink
Beneath the wave, like bubbles on the stream
Upward they rise, though fleeting as a dream.

Is there some strange affinity between
Marriage and Holy Orders? if the mind
Well-poised and thoughtful as it should have been,
Not vaguely fitful as the summer wind,
Regard the solemn nature of the scene
With fitting eyes, by prayer long disciplined ;
When each heart prompts the voice and from above
Descend the threefold graces crowned by love.

Was that voice speaking in the secret heart

Of all, who stood within that cloistered pile,

In prayer that God His Spirit would impart,—

His armour to resist the tempter's will,—

His shield of faith to quench the fiery dart ?

Before His altar in a surpliced file

They took the oaths and breathed the solemn vows.

Bound them to Christ, as Christ unto His spouse.

Was there no heart indifferent and cold,

Or kindled by a momentary fire ?

No passions glancing backward, as of old

That monument of mercy and of ire,

Who turned upon the melancholy wold,

And would not—could not bid her thoughts
aspire

To sing the song of gratitude and praise,

Chained by the memories of early days ?

No disappointed spirits whom the past
Had hurled in anger from the flowery way
Of pride or pleasure ruined and aghast ?

No souls that should themselves be taught to pray
Ere that—their bread upon the waters cast—
They hoped for blessings on a future day ?
That goaded on by circumstance or force
Fled to the Church as to a last resource ?

Were all hearts fixed intently on their God,
All hopes—all talents to His service given,
Longing to tread the path their Saviour trod,
All earthly passions from their spirit riven,
And from the dreary lane and miry road
Seek the lost sheep and guide them up to heaven ?
Were all hearts seeking from the God above
In earnest prayer the Spirit of His love ?

O'er Aubrey's heart rushed thoughts of other years.

When Revolution bared her bloody hand :—

Of children torn from parents,—hopes and fears,—

And Devastation stalking o'er the land

And smiling at the patriot's sainted tears

Looked on this isle as on a barren strand

Where Liberty arising from the wave

Rose but to find herself a tyrant's slave :—

The cannon's deadly roar,—the bullet's ring,—

The rebel leader stretched upon the plain

By the deaf knight, like Israel's boastful king,

Who dreamed not that his power was on the wane,

By a chance arrow from the Syrian string

At even numbered with the heaps of slain :—

The long protracted siege,—the crashing spire,—

The maddened outburst of fanatic ire,

That like a stream in giant barriers pent
Swept down the mountain in a torrent flood,
And through the rock-bound pass asunder rent
Whirled its wild course through cornland—
meadow—wood ;—
And like the plagues on hardened Pharoah sent
Blighted the land, the rivers turned to blood,
Nor slack'd its speed until its swollen wave
Spent its last fury on a Sovereign's grave !

* * * *

In a sequestered village fell his lot
With that one being to his heart endeared ;
A dozen houses clustered in a knot
Behind him, where the old gray fabric reared
Its sturdy tower ; and o'er his garden plot
Upon the hill a sister Church appeared,
Half screened in summer by the fluttering rank
Of poplars bending o'er the river bank.

As in the noon of summer o'er the scene

Peace calmly brooded, save where rival mills
Perched on bright patches of luxuriant green
Flung sprays of silver upward from the rills,
That from the river starting glanced between

Snake-like among the meadows ; from the hills
Came on the freshening breeze the breath of health,
Rich in the golden store of Nature's wealth.

He was not born for chimney-haunted towns,

Where smoke and dust pervade the cabined room,
Where in the spring the mid-day sun but frowns,
And May is half o'erclouded with the gloom :

He loved the open plain, the breezy downs,

Where golden furze and purple heather bloom ;
One to his spirit broadened into light,
The other deepened into shades of night.

He might have lived as happy as the wind
That bloweth where it listeth, but his oath
Lay heavy on his soul ; he could not bind
His reason to endorse his plighted troth,
And conscience whispered to his perjured mind,
Bound to confess though to confession loth,
That he had pledged his honor to fulfil
A service, which his heart rejected still.

From some sweet arbor on a sunny day
Look out and watch upon the meadow grass
The dark-limbed shadows of the trees at play,
Chasing the golden shadows as they pass ;
So swiftly rises, swiftly dies away,
Form after form upon the mystic glass ;
So on the tell-tale features smiles and tears
Reflect the changing lights of infant years.

Let nature witness ! drops of rain will fall
 Upon the brightest hour of rosy eve ;
The sweetest pleasures on the senses pall,
 And naught but idle recollections leave ;
Joy summons us unto her festive hall,
 And at the height of gladness bids us grieve,
That those dear hopes have waned away so soon,
Before we fancied they had reached their noon.

Far more when sin enthralls a willing mind,
 Though fairy birds soft strains of music fling
Around our daily path, Care sails behind
 Black-browed with sleepless eye on flapping wing ;
The golden corn pays homage to the wind
 That sweepeth by, as chieftains hail their king ;
So man no longer free by sin possessed
Enthrones a tyrant in his servile breast.

He watched that night the pale moon slowly rise

Above the distant hills amid the glow

Of twice ten thousand stars that lit the skies ;

Then listless gazed upon the earth below,

Where cold, yet sparkling as the flashing eyes

Of some proud beauty, gleamed the frosted snow

Strewn as it were with diamonds, till his mind

Fled from the past yet vainly strove to find

Some haven in the future ; as the dove,

From the dull prison of the Ark set free,

Went forth upon her pilgrimage of love,

And scanned the bosom of the boundless sea,

If haply gleamed the watery wastes above

The first bright leaflet of a new-born tree ;

If haply smiled —— but all was barren there,

Heaved the wild billow, gloomed the murky air.

“ Men are but slaves,” he cried, “ they would be
kings,

And breathe their sorrows to the reckless wind,
As if they fled upon its viewless wings

And left them free from care; there lurks behind
A sense of woe, and recollection brings

Sad thoughts of hopes so closely intertwined
With our whole being, that they rise again
Fresh from their ashes, blighted but in vain.

“ Men are but servants when they would be lords,
As well control the fury of the blast

As stem the current of the thoughts.” Those words

Flung Aubrey’s vivid soul into the past;
Hope touched with lingering hand her thrilling
chords,

The sunbeam glimmered through the shadows cast
O’er his young heart, when joy-bells from the tower
Chimed through the stillness of the evening hour.

Why chime the New Year bells?

Why chime, ye heartless bells?

Why breathe sweet music o'er a dying bed?

Why revel o'er the grave?

Greet not the heir, before his sire be dead,

Wake not the smile, before the tear be shed;

Upon the restless wave

Of Time he passes to the silent shore

To join the kindred band that passed before.

Chime not, ye heartless bells!

Why chime, ye mocking bells?

Nature but little with your mirth agrees;

The old dark timbers groan,

Strange voices murmur in the winter breeze,

And wildly chatter through the naked trees;

And like a withered crone

That cowering sits beside her flickering light

The moping owl shrieks to the shivering night.

Chime not, ye mocking bells!

Why chime, ye merry bells ?

I cannot say that in the lighted hall

I love the song of mirth,

For on this night there ever seems to fall

Upon my heart a darkly-woven pall,

As speeds the year from earth ;

And when we think on all that may have been

Can we find pleasure in a festive scene ?

Chime not, ye merry bells !

Why chime, ye reckless bells ?

Were no bright hopes of youthful beauty shorn,

That in the blushing light

Of spring to noble aspirations born,

Once glimmered as the herald star of morn

Forgetful of the night ?

No wasted hours to mourn for ? not a day

That passed in dreamlike idleness away ?

Chime not, ye reckless bells !

Why chime, forgetful bells?
Has no sweet bud, no fondly-cherished flower,
That round our hearts in spring
Twined like the woodbine o'er her summer bower,
Untimely faded in a wee short hour?

No spirit taken wing
From that dear home she gladdened with her
mirth
When first the young year rose upon the earth?
Chime not, forgetful bells!

There is a something in the New Year's morn
That wins the spirit to its own blithe tone;
A feeling as of gladness freshly born,
A fragrance as of roses early blown,
A golden vision as of waving corn,
Though springing blades in the late autumn sown
Scarce gleam above the surface of the earth,
Foreshadowing beauty even from its birth.

And if that morning fall upon the day
Of hallowed rest, a brighter spirit glows
Within the bounding heart ; the sacred way
Is trod with lighter steps ; the greeting flows
From kindlier hearts ; and when we kneel to pray
The soul in hope looks forward to the close
Of earthly years when time shall be no more
Nor seasons wane as they have waned before,—

Looks forward to the dawn of that new year
Whereon eternal summer brightly gleams ;
When hope shall rest, triumphant over fear,
Fulfilled in joys that mock her worldly dreams ;
When love forgetful of the bitter tear
Shall sweetly bask in Love's unfading beams ;
When God's own gracious presence shall inspire
The song of praise amid an angel choir.

I love to linger on a neighbouring hill

When bells are chiming from the village church,

I love to see the graveyard slowly fill

With life and health—some wander on in search
Of a green mound where lies so calmly still

A sister's sleeping form ; the tasseled birch
Lists to the solemn converse which they hold,
Waiting the Shepherd's entrance to his fold.

Age slowly toiling up the steep ascent

Rests on its staff—the peasant's wooden clank
Beats the hard road—a merry urchin bent

On filching one sweet floweret from the bank
Where early primroses with violets blent

Smile in the sun—steals softly from the rank
Of village children, grasps his tempting prize
And slyly hides it from the watchful eyes

That scarcely chide ; the pastor's word of praise
Brings blood to the full cheek and flushing brow
Of honest children ; ruddy farmers raise
Their hats in answer to his gentle bow
(Well nigh forgotten in these latter days !)
As gravely passing through the clustered row
With solemn steps he leads his Christian flock
To quaff pure water from the living Rock.

But what thought Aubrey as he passed along
The chosen shepherd of these erring sheep,
And coldly gazed upon the motley throng ?
What thought he as he climbed the frozen steep ?
Would he arouse them with a spirit song,
Or leave them in their ignorance asleep ?
Or would he boldly battle in the strife
And be their leader to the land of life ?

What fancies darted through his fevered mind ?

What thought possessed his spirit, when he
found

The very walls with floral emblems lined,

Garlands of scarlet holly flung around

The stately pillars, ivy intertwined

Around the sacred cross with laurel crowned,

The altar flames that typify the Light

That burst upon the shades of heathen night ?

He longed for some far-stretching prairie plain,

Where virgin fields are rolling to and fro,

Like ocean waves, untainted by the stain

Of man's proud foot, and brighten in the glow

Of twice ten thousand flowers that never wane

In beauty, though they perish as they grow ;

His spirit longed to revel in the feast

Of solitude with Nature for his priest.

Such fields far westward, where, as he had heard,
Wild sailors knelt upon the teeming sod,
Hushed their rude oaths, and felt their spirit stirred
As if in presence of the mighty God
Who hears the simple carol of a bird—
Who rules by mercy—spurns the iron rod
Of cruel chastisement and loves the voice
That bids the creatures of His hand rejoice.

He would have lived unfettered by the forms
Of worship, linked to each specific creed,
Which men, forgetful that they are but worms,
Framed as the test of faith ;—a fragile reed
That quivers in the fury of the storm
Which human passions never cease to breed ;
Since each religion set on foot by man
Was rent asunder, ere its power began.

But when he looked upon a busy world
That boasts its title to a Saviour's name
And saw Dissension's factious flag unfurled,
And reckless of an adversary's fame
Charges on charges rancorously hurled
From side to side till glory turned to shame,
Reason misdoubted that the germ of life
Lay in the bosom of conflicting strife.

Far better look on Nature's lovely face,
Far better read her pure unwritten word;
Each being holds his own allotted place,
And each chord vibrates to its sister chord,
And in his grandest works let reason trace
The mighty presence of Creation's Lord,
The one true God who by a single breath
Can make, destroy, consign to life or death.

He read the Sacred Word with labored care,
Yet no emotion quivered in his voice,
He warmed not to the spirit of his prayer,
Let those who listened make the fitting choice,
They still might coldly linger in despair
Or seize the promised blessing and rejoice ;
With listless hands the precious seed was sown—
He cared not if it fell upon a stone.

He preached : his heart was in his labor then,
And in his eye the glance of conscious power
Gleamed as the sunlight on a darkling glen
Kissing the dewdrop from the sleeping flower ;
He spoke as man unto his fellow-men,
And charmed their fancy for the passing hour,
Then like a meteor shooting through the night,
Untracked and trackless vanished from their sight.

For like a torrent speeding from the hills,
 Gifted by nature with a rapid flow
Of pregnant words, and fed by sparkling rills
 Of illustration, scattered to and fro,
Of beauty glimmering round mortal ills
 Like flowers that on a dark-streamed river grow,
His burning eloquence depicted life,
In hope and fear the battlefield of strife.

Then resting for a moment as the dove
 Poised in mid heaven upon her silent wings,
Or gently soaring toward the realms above,
 Further from earth, more softly, sweetly sings,
He led their thoughts to that immortal love,
 The Gilead balm that consolation brings,
That love for God which in His wise decrees
 Buoyed up by faith the hand of mercy sees.

He spoke from Scripture merely as a form ;

Though it were fiction, Jonah's figured gourd
Showed that the sudden fury of a storm,

Or the keen edge of an avenging sword,
Were not more powerful than a humble worm ;

God, the Creator, by a simple word,
Could rend in twain the palace of the proud,
And veil their brightness in the darkest cloud.

Such was his teaching : Israel of old

Gave lessons rich in beauty on each page :
From Achan's story glared the lust of gold,

From bald Elisha, reverence of age,
The leprous noble spiritless and cold,

The cruel wars which brethren loved to wage,
Supplied the outlines of his model plan

Whereon to frame the conduct of a man.

And yet that seed dropped by a careless hand

In some young heart perchance took kindly
root ;

The heathen ploughboy scatters on the land

Grain that will ripen in a golden fruit ;

Events have happened that were never planned ;

Beasts loudly spoken that were counted mute ;

Despite the workman's ignorance or skill

God can bring good from evil, if He will.

A good word rarely falls on barren ground :—

Perchance it seems to pass upon the wind,

The idle echo of an empty sound,

And leave no traces of its birth behind ;

Or 'mid the cares of earthly pleasure drowned

It lurks unheeded in a listless mind ;—

Years may have passed, yet mercy's spirit-gleam

Calls it to life with fructifying beam.

Seeds that have lain in an Egyptian tomb

Burst forth in richness by the sun beguiled ;

Flowers spring in beauty from the earth's dark
womb,

When chance removes the soil above them piled ;
The gay laburnum's gold-enamelled bloom

Lay curled within the plaything of a child ;

Death-like they may have seemed, but sun and rain
All-powerful summoned them to life again.

So months rolled slowly onward, till the year

Drew toward its close and donned its robe of snow ;

And hopes that slept again began to rear

Their fairy forms, though causing tears to flow ;

For though he came among them full of fear

He left them with regret, and felt the glow

Of pure affection which his love had thrown

Around their hearts reflected in his own.

Hearts that are won with kindness rarely stray
Far from their first allegiance ; love may rise
Bright and unclouded at the birth of day
Yet wane in sadness, ere the western skies
Burn in the golden twilight ; and the ray
That glimmers o'er the path of friendship dies
In clouds of dark distrust, or fades from sight
Lost in the shadows of advancing night.

'T was not the voice of duty but of love
That bade him seek the home of the oppressed,
And to the widow and the orphan prove
His heart re-echoed what his lips professed ;
And as in form commissioned from above
So in the spirit was his mission blessed ;
The liberal hand which bade the poor rejoice
Was e'en less welcome than his gentle voice.

For he had passed among them, like a spring
 Welling through mountain woods in silver glow,
That in the shelving valleys loves to sing
 Weaving sweet music as its waters flow,
And blithely laughing, as the gray rocks fling
 Wave after wave upon the brook below ;
Where mirrored on the stream, that laves her root,
The wild ash wonders at her coral fruit.

Still onward—oceanward—the mountain stream
 Pursues its destined course ; through sunny
 flowers
Round which it loves to linger in a dream
 Of calm delight ;—lost in the darkling bowers
That skirt its waters ;—gilded by the beam
 Of dancing sunlight ;—freshened by the showers ;
Till joined by sister streams its swelling wave
Is lost for ever in an ocean grave.

Fain would it linger where as beauty smiled

The black rock flung it from his giant side

In streams of flashing silver through the wild:—

The lulling music, as its waters glide

Around the stony fragments rudely piled,

Is sweeter than the roaring of its tide ;

It may not rest or loiter on its way—

Her king commands and Nature must obey.

And so for man no resting place in life,

His fortunes changing with the changing year :

Clouds veiling sunlight—shouts of battle strife

Waking the dream of peace—hope lost in fear—

Fear with the gleam of expectation rife—

Make up the sum of his existence here ;

Bright though the beauty of his infant home

Far from its prospect he is doomed to roam.

So on the confines of a dreary pass

The traveller turns one lingering glance behind
On waving meadow-fields of twinkling grass,—

On pleasant paths with fragrant hedgerows lined;
Before—around him towers the beetling mass

Of barren rocks through which his road must
wind ;

In vain he looks: 'tis only to regret,—

Trust to the future and the past forget.

There was a peaceful village girt around

With mountains ; on the right a giant chair,
Where sate the border chief with glory crowned

In ages past ; the black rock of despair
High o'er the vale in lonely grandeur frowned ;

A solitary fir-tree glooming there
Told the sad tale (so native minstrels show)
Of knightly treachery and maiden woe.

But all was changed : the busy whirling mill
Peering through lines of snowy wool looked down
On smiling faces and the prattling rill
That fed the labor of the thriving town ;
And Aubrey loved to climb the rugged hill,
And weave in fancy a poetic crown,
Or sing beneath the fir-tree shade once more
The strange old tale of legendary lore.

The Legend of the Larch.

Baron Wilfrid of the Marches,
Baron Wilfrid bold and free,
Loved the Lady of the Larches,
Lady Alice De la Lee :
To the dauntless forest-ranger,
In the chase or in the strife,
Moments rife with wildest danger
Were the dearest of his life.

Fiercely through the tangled bushes,
Through the wood with brambles lined,
O'er the plain the wild boar rushes,
When the Baron rides behind :
By the silver-flashing fountain,
O'er the moorland bleak and bare,
Up the heather-tufted mountain,
Till he beard him in his lair.

As the writhing of the liver
To the frenzy of the brain :
As the storm upon the river
To the tempest on the main :
So the chase though all-exciting
To the foes who will not yield
To the fury of the fighting
On the fatal battle-field.

Fields that fire and sword polluted,—
Fields that owned a foreign sway,
Richly-laden, golden-fruited,
Hailed the glowing summer day :
Streams that on their silver bosoms
Loathed the stain of crimson gore,
Hailed the snowy petalled blossoms
Floating on the wave once more.

See the joyous crowds attending,
As he leads his gallant band :
Merlin's heir before him bending
Waves aloft his magic wand :
O'er the sheathèd sword of duty
Loud applauses rend the air ;
Bowed before the smiles of beauty
See the victor vanquished there !

Spear and sword he flings beside her,

Wooing her to be his own :

Pleading that his love may guide her

To the hallowed altar throne :

Blushed she at his warm caresses,

Blushed she at the kiss he gave :

Falcon lured in silken tresses

Ne'er was more a maiden's slave.

Then her dark eyes coyly raising

To her lover gently said :

“ August's sun is fiercely blazing

Soon the summer will have fled :

When the autumn trees are shedding

Russet leaves on every side ;

Then, my lord, prepare the wedding

I will be thine own dear bride.”

As the flame that fiercely flashes
From its hidden spark of light ;
As the Phœnix from its ashes
Rose the fiery stream of fight :
Swiftly sped the fatal tidings,—
Roused the sturdy sons of Wales,
O'er the craggy mountain gliding,
Bounding o'er the golden vales.

Sternly from his love-dream starting,
That undaunted chief arose ;
From his mountain eyrie darting
Like an eagle on his foes :
“ 'T is no time for puling sorrow,
Bid my raven standard fly,
I'll be with you on the morrow,
Ere the sun is in the sky.

“ But one night to love and beauty—

But one night I will devote ;

Welcome then the call of duty,

Where the Saxon banners float :

Ere the autumn trees are shedding

Russet leaves on every side,

I 'll be with thee for the wedding

With a guerdon for my bride.”

Up the winding path together,

By the mountain-cradled rill,

Where the crimson-tufted heather

Shed a glory round the hill :

Slowly through the wood ascending

See the knight and maiden fair,

Thousand flowerets sweetly blending

Breathed their fragrance in the air.

Summer birds were blithely singing
Through the night-encircled grove,
Stars of purest light were flinging
Round their path the rays of love :
What though precious hours were fleeting,
Though the fatal morn drew nigh,
Heart to heart was fondly beating—
“ Catch the moments as they fly.”

O'er the hills affection greeting
Rose the moon in purest grace ;
But the shades of night retreating
Flung a shadow o'er her face :
Purely welled a crystal fountain
High above the lovers' seat,
But when sunlight kissed the mountain
Bitter mingled with the sweet !

He was strong and she confiding
 'Trusted him she loved too well ;
Through her pulses love was gliding
 Till her heart began to swell :
Till she thought not that around her
 His dear arms were fondly thrown—
Till the morning watches found her
 Pale, deserted, and alone.

Hundreds of the brave were lying
 In the cold embrace of death :
Hundreds of his comrades dying
 Hailed him with their latest breath :
For the mid-day sun was glowing
 Upon many a broken shield ;
And the river crimson flowing,
 Ere the Baron reached the field.

In the centre, in the vanguard,
On the left, or on the right,
Waved the Baron's raven standard
Through the thickest of the fight :
Turning, wheeling, never resting,
Where the fight had sorest need,
Every inch of ground contesting
Flew the Baron's coal black steed.

Though their courage never slumbered
To do battle for the right ;
Yet his gallant band outnumbered
Hailed the growing shades of night ;
When from fierce pursuit returning
As he heard the trumpet call :
When with angry spirit burning
As he saw his standard fall :—

“ Will ye fly ? ” he cried in anger,

“ Will ye see my standard lie

Under-trampled by the stranger ?

Will ye rescue it or die ?

Fie ! ye gallant British bowmen,

Fie ! ye sturdy sons of Wales,

Will ye let the Saxon foemen

Lord it o’er your hills and dales ?

If no word of mine can fire you—

If no thought of home has power—

If no living voice inspire you—

Fight for OWEN OF GLENDOWER ! ”

Then above the roar and rattle

Rose a cry “ We will not yield ! ”

So a Douglas won the battle,

Though his corse lay on the field :

As of old in Roman story
 Spirit-warriors led the van,
When the mantle of their glory
 Seemed to fall on every man :
So a giant form before them
 Hovered o'er the crimson field ;
Proudly waving banners o'er them
 Which were never known to yield.

As the storm-cloud wildly rushes
 Down Plinlimmon's rocky side :
As the torrent fiercely gushes
 O'er the weir in swollen tide :
Fearless of the deadly quiver
 Dashed that gallant hero band ;
Till beside the startled river
 Foemen wrestled hand to hand :

Till the summer sun was setting
In a flood of crimson glow
All but hearth and home forgetting
Fought they with the stubborn foe :
Till the heaps of dead and dying
Marked the havoc of the fight,—
Till the broken ranks were flying
Through the silence of the night.

Hundred fires to Heaven ascending
Blazed the mountain heights along ;
Hundred hundred voices blending
Raised the mighty triumph song :
Hearts though widowed proudly burning
Hailed the father in the son ;
Lovers full of hope returning
Claimed the kiss which glory won.

One sweet face was pale with watching
Through the midnight dark and drear ;
Hope at every rumour catching
Trembled on the verge of fear :
Still he came not ; he was waiting
At the Saxon council board
Till his wisdom in debating
Crowned the prowess of his sword.

But when autumn trees were shedding
Russet leaves on every side,
And he came not to the wedding
With a guerdon for his bride :
Then her heart began to fail her,
Saddened with a deep regret ;
Then her rosy cheeks grew paler,
Though her love was strong as yet.

“ He but tarries for a season
At the Saxon monarch’s throne :
Were my love devoid of reason
’T were unworthy of his own :
Though my heart be sorely bleeding,
Though his face I long to see :
Wales ! for thee his voice is pleading,
Shall I grudge him unto thee ? ”

When the winter storms descending
Cader Idris wreathed in snow,
Vague alarm with hope was blending,—
Sorrow thickened on her brow :
“ Why be fearful ? why mistrust him ?
Though they circle round a throne
Peerless maidens shall not thrust him
From a heart that is his own.

Soon the spring in beauty beaming

Flung her jewels on the earth,—

Jewels that were brightly gleaming

In the freshness of their birth :

Hope that lingered long in sorrow

Left her in a widowed home,

Lonely pining for the morrow,

Sadly weeping “he will come.”

Strange that in the host of Satan

Ridicule should powerful be :

Strange that man should love to batten

On the food of flattery :

Mock your victim you will find him

Cowed and passive in your hands :

Flatter wisely you may bind him

Captive though in silken bands.

They who could not triumph o'er him
In the clashing strife of arms
Knew that Samson fell before him
By a false Dalilah's charms :
Who could brave his bold defiance ?
Beauty must the siren be :
Who could win his close alliance ?
Beauty linked with Liberty !

Wales ! he thought on thee and duty,
Ere he sheathed his conquering sword ;
Alice ! on thy fair young beauty,
Ere he spoke the fatal word :—
Thought upon that silver fountain,
And the joys that hour revealed ;—
On that crimson-tufted mountain,
Where the vows of love were sealed.

As the king in ancient story,
When he saw his princes bleed,
Knew that to his hard-earned glory
Speedy ruin must succeed :
So he saw that single-handed
Wales could not maintain the strife ;
When the Saxon chieftains banded
Battled for his country's life.

So o'er love deposed and weeping
Rose the form of Liberty,
In her golden valleys sleeping
From the Severn to the sea !
All was over : crowds caressing
Proudly gathered round his side :
But the lips that hailed the blessing
Hailed the Baron's stranger bride !

All was over : life was blighted :
Like a pale and withered flower
Waned the hope which love had lighted
In that short bewitching hour :
Coldly waiting for the morrow,
Though the morrow's hope had flown ;
Brooding o'er her secret sorrow,
Sorrow that was all her own :—

Oft she gazed upon the billow
Flashing in its silver gleam :
'T was too bright :—the weeping willow
Hung above a darker stream ;
Oft she wandered by the fountain,
Fragrant lilies bloomed around ;
Far above the sullen mountain
O'er a desert sternly frowned.

Snowy garments flung around her
Like a spirit of the night
From her home she passed : they found her
Lifeless at the dawn of light ;
Stars of midnight heard her crying
Madly upon death to save,
Stars of eve beheld her lying
In a lone untimely grave !

There the Baron, sternly seated,
Gazed upon the vale below,
Mourning o'er the joys that greeted
Hopes which fled like April snow ;
So that rock on minstrel pages
Glooms the black rock of Despair ;
So that seat on countless ages
Frowns the Baron's giant chair.

Woods circle round the mountain in a ring
Of silver birches : birds at noontide rest
And watch the fairy tassels as they swing
In the soft breeze, as if their summer nest
Were woven for them by the blushing spring
Who flings a brighter plumage on their breast :
The sun peeps through the leaves and loves to throw
A golden light upon the flowers below.

Here Aubrey wandered in a thoughtful mood
Some six months after, when the corn was white
For harvest ; from the thickest of the wood,
Where clustering leaves shut out the noonday
light,
And spread a pleasant shade, there came a flood
Of gushing music ; on a summer night
He would have paused and listened to the tale
Trilled sweetly by the love-lorn nightingale.

It came again : there's something in a voice
Once heard that to the memory loves to cling
And bids the hearer in the past rejoice ;
So one late autumn day recalls the spring
In all its freshness ; and the darling choice
Of early years comes back, as to the king
Imprisoned in the dungeon of his foe
The trusty minstrel's greeting from below.

He knew the voice : the song, the woodland scene,
Were moulded in one vision ; round and round
With silent steps through brushwood edged with
green
Along a grassy path he softly wound :
A group of hollies interposed a screen
Of thickset leaves with scarlet berries crowned ;
One glance—for beauty seen but for a day,
From foud remembrance cannot pass away—

One glance sufficed, and to his mind it seemed

As if that scene were acted long ago,

So strong a light across his memory streamed ;

So from our fancy visions love to flow—

Visions of which perchance we only dreamed—

Of scenes or persons whom we seem to know ;

One glance, one onward step, and Aubrey stood

Before her in the silence of the wood.

She started, as from a distressing dream,

The rich life-blood her lovely cheeks forsook

And came again, as lights the sunny gleam

On a pale flower in some sequestered nook ;

Her bosoms heaved and fell as on the stream

The queen-like lilies dancing on the brook ;

Her cheek was somewhat paler, and her eye

Had lost the freshness of its gaiety.

It might be that the roses loved to fade

On her fair cheek, that they might bloom again

In crimson freshness ; that the smiles which played

Around her lips, like sunbeams o'er the plain,

Or wavelets o'er a lake that courts the shade

Of graceful willows, loved at times to wane

That they might rise in dimpled beauty there

Upon a face that ever must be fair.

It might be that the laughter-loving light

Which beamed of old in her deep violet eye,

Was wont to fade, e'en as the stars of night

Pale in the brightness of a sunlit sky,

And one by one peep out to greet our sight

In new-born beauty as the eve draws nigh ;

It might be that the morning would restore

Her charms in all their freshness as of yore.

The well-remembered voice, the kindly word,
Her name by his lips spoken sent a thrill
Of rapture coursing through her frame and stirred
New life within her, caused her eyes to fill
With tears of grateful joy ; her prayer was heard,
He stood beside her and was gentle still.
“ ‘Thy father loved his cottage farm—’tis strange !
Can he be —— tell me, why this sudden change?’ ”

More words of welcome, kind yet commonplace,
Followed in quick succession from his lips ;
Was then the sun which Fancy loved to trace
In orightness doomed to suffer an eclipse ?
His greeting flung a shadow o’er her face
And chilled her heart ; for like a bird that dips
Its white wing in the wave, he seemed to light
But for one moment in a passing flight

Upon her hopes and left the tale untold :

As when the sunlight falls with sudden beam

On a dark rock the sleeping flowers unfold

Their laughing eyes, and dewy mosses seem

To start into fresh being edged with gold,

And scarlet-tinted lichens lightly gleam

Along its cold black surface, so a smile,

A whispered word of kindness will beguile

The stricken heart from brooding o'er its care—

Perchance to life itself it may have clung

With feelings of a deepening despair ;

Far more when that sad heart is warm and young;

Those listless words were more than she could bear,

Sylvina with a sudden impulse flung

Her twining arms around him, and inspired

By love that disappointment only fired

The burning words which could not be repressed,
 Prompted by hopes that mocked her maiden pride,
Burst from her lips and her deep love confessed :

 “ Oh ! let me ever wander by thy side,
Let but my head be pillowed on that breast,
 I care not if I may not be thy bride,
Though that were passing sweet—to roam with thee
The height of human happiness would be ! ”

Why reason on the cause ? we all know love :

 Ay, we all know, but who has e`er defined
Its inner springs of action ? who can prove

 Or test its secret workings ? like the wind
It runs its fitful courses ; born above,

 Baptised below, for Nature has assigned
To love each changing form which water takes
In headlong torrents, rivulets, or lakes.

The bounding torrent leaps from hill to hill
Reckless of obstacles which interpose,
Like passion bending all things to its will ;
The river flings fresh beauty as it flows
Around the spangled meadows ; calm and still
The peaceful lake reflects the sunset-glows ;
So love contented with the joys of home
Far from its precincts never cares to roam.

And she was but a wild untutored thing,
That knew not of the perils she incurred ;
The world was naught to her : she loved to sing
Her artless snatches, like a woodland bird ;
And as the climbing flowers are wont to fling
Their tendrils round the branches, which are
stirred
By the soft breeze, so clung she to the mate
Thrown in her path by Providence or Fate.

Her tale of love was told : they were alone

In the dark wood secure from virtue's frown ;

Upon the hour which love delights to own

The crescent moon was faintly looking down ;

And honor trembled for the vaunted throne

Whereon she sat triumphant, and her crown

In danger seemed of falling from the brow,

Whereon 'twas ne'er so firmly fixed as now.

He who resists alone is truly great—

Though inborn talent, energy, or skill,

Close-leagued with fortune, circumstance, or fate,

May pander to the dictates of a will

And proudly revel in a high estate,

The rose-cheeked future beckons onward still ;—

Far brighter laurels Cæsar would have won,

Had he ne'er crossed the mighty Rubicon.

Resistance is not easy: it implies

A strength of purpose which we rarely find ;

A stedfast glance of faith beyond the skies,

To earth, its pleasures, and temptations blind ;

A brave young heart that dares to sacrifice

Those worldly lusts which leave a sting behind ;

A love which cares not for itself alone,

But guards a neighbour's honor like its own.

The fluttering insect dies not ere she breeds

Her countless thousands in the lap of spring ;

Each trifling act is pregnant with the seeds

Of good or evil, that will surely bring

A crop of golden corn or flaunting weeds ;

One darling vice, one sin that loves to cling

Around our hearts, perchance may trace its birth

To careless words of folly or of mirth.

Be not contented with the present ; look—

Look far into the future, strain your eyes

And strive to read in that unwritten book

The power which one light deed may exercise
On moments yet unborn ; the tiny brook,

That basking in the summer sunlight lies

A line of twinkling silver, will be lost

Amid the waves of ocean tempest-tossed.

He looked upon that trembling, trusting form—

On the cold world 't were hard to fling away

The dove that sought a refuge from the storm

In his own bosom, where she might not stay ;
And he who trod not lightly on the worm

That crossed his morning path, could he betray ?
That fond confiding heart should not complain,
Her love was sacred though she loved in vain.

Yet more: there rose between him and the face,
That hid its blushing beauty on his breast,
A form as perfect as her own in grace ;
And recollections of a love confessed
In looks and tones which time could not erase
From his young heart, where they must ever rest,
Came back and stood between him and the maid
And bade him pity though he might not aid.

“ It may not be : you know not what you ask,
You dream not whither such a course would
tend ;
And though it be a cold and thankless task
To say, ‘ I love you not,’ to put an end
To your fond hope, ’t is better than to mask
My feelings toward you, and a love pretend
Which has no life : the sky will brighten yet,
Trust in the future and the past forget.”

One pressure of the hand, and he was gone,

The yielding branches screened him from her sight ;

Beneath the moonlit sky she stood alone,

So changed by that short meeting that the night
Beheld the girl into the woman grown ;

His words had thrown an unexpected light
Upon her feelings, and at morn the dream
Of love was floating on a distant stream.

Slowly we change : as seasons ebb and flow

New thoughts arise, new passions warm our blood,
The impatient youth that wandered to and fro,

Or on the brink of manhood idly stood,
What time he crossed the stream can rarely know ;

She sprang like Eve to sudden womanhood,
Full-formed, though formed in tears, in one short
hour

The bud expanded in a perfect flower.

New life had dawned for Aubrey—when the year
 Basked in her summer smiles and o'er the mead
Revelled the golden kingcups, when the mere
 With fragrant lilies heaved, a tiny seed
Fell in his warm young heart and flourished there,
 Affection watched its growth and bid it feed
Its new-born life on hope ; from heaven above
God gave it being, mortals call it love.

Her raven hair was braided o'er a brow
 That told her Spanish blood ; the northern sky
May boast its maidens fair as mountain snow,
 Almost as cold, the western sunbeams fly
To tinge their daughters' cheeks and bid them glow
 In beauty like its own ; her hazel eye,
Half-raised to meet his glance and then withdrawn,
Spoke though it spoke in silence of the dawn

Of deep pure love, that strengthened day by day,

Tender and trusting in its tenderness ;

Friend of her youth, companion of her way

He might destroy, but he alone could bless ;

She rested on him as her life's young stay,

For come what might she could not love him less ;

His wild ambition to the wind was thrown,

For life—for death—IÓNE was his own.

So time rolled on : what recked they of his flight ?

The ruin that despoiled the autumn bowers

Brought no sad thoughts to them of wintry night,

For love presided o'er the laughing hours ;

Earth was encircled with a purer light,

And spring herself was wreathed with fairer
flowers ;

Faith knit their hearts, and hope beguiled the way,

Twin morning stars that usher in the day.

As wakes the child to rank and riches born,
Life's gayest visions flashing on his sight,
So rose the sun upon a summer morn
Bathing the woodlands in a golden light ;
Unrivalled, save that lingered pale and lorn
The young moon sole survivor of the night,
Though loth to go still more averse to stay
And view the splendor of the new-born day ;—

Bright in his youth, and though the fleeting hours
Died in the act of giving beauty birth,
Tinging with fresher hues the dewy bowers,
Waking a fuller strain of love and mirth ;
Forgetful that the early blooming flowers
Are but the first to fade and fall to earth ;
Forgetful that the prophet's hand-shaped cloud
Ere noon may wrap his brightness in a shroud.

They wandered arm in arm beneath the shade

Of honeyed limes, conversing as they went ;

Or turned aside into a mossy glade,

Where wild wood roses o'er the streamlet bent ;

And dreamed not that the fragrant flowers must
fade,

Or that their day of love was well-nigh spent :

They spoke—they felt—they thought in harmony,

Or if they differed, differed to agree.

And when he spoke of Nature in a tone

Almost of rapture, she had not a fear

But that his thoughts were figured in her own,

Or that Her wondrous works were more than dear ;

She dreamed not that his boyhood's love had grown

Into his heart's own idol year by year ;

Or that a darker under-current lay

Beneath the stream that sparkled on its way.

He might have read her heart, yet could not know,
 Though mirrored in her life that heart was
 shown,

The enduring strength, the truth, the deathless glow
 Of deep pure love, that in her bosom shone ;

To him in hours of misery or woe

 An angel comforter she would have flown,
And shared his lot ; without him would have died,
Or counted death a blessing by his side.

She sang : I love to hear a woman sing,

 Alone, unaided by artistic skill ;

Not all the music of the eastern king

 Is half so sweet in woodland, grove, or hill,
As her rich voice, which bird-like loves to fling

 A charm around each note, and seems to thrill
The heart with its own music, as it tells
A sweeter tale than distant marriage-bells.

Jone's Song.

I love the ripple on the dale,
 When harebells robe the hill,
And spreading o'er the scented vale
 Bathe in the winding rill,
That flashes by the hawthorn seat
 A silver-woven line,
Where summer roses fondly meet
 And sweetly intertwine.

I love the ripple on the stream
 Upon a moonlit eve,
When o'er my spirit steals the dream,
 Which love and fancy weave :
A dream perchance of buried hours
 Of loved ones gone before,
Bedecked with well-remembered flowers,
 That bloom for evermore.

I love the ripple on the corn,
 That rustles in the breeze,
When the pale beam of autumn morn
 First glimmers through the trees ;
When cloudlets on the azure sky
 Their fairy shapes unfold,
I love to watch the shadows fly
 Across a field of gold.

I love the ripple on the wave,
 The diamonds on the deep,
Which hope-like sparkle o'er the grave
 Of mariners asleep ;
The mirrored stars night after night
 Upon the waters glow,
As if one gleam of heavenly light
 Were faintly traced below.

There was a sudden darkness overhead,
A stillness in the air, as if the night
Trespassed on midday ; blackness overspread
The lurid arch of heaven and veiled the light ;
From East, from West the threatening masses fled
To swell the storm, that revelled in its might
And scarce restrained its fury, till the wind
Marshalled the clouds that lingered yet behind.

For, like a giant from his lair, the breeze,
That slept that summer morn, with sullen moan
Swept through the wood and rocked the startled
trees ;
Branch against branch was tremulously thrown,
Like waves upon the tempest-smitten seas ;
The very birds forgot their joyous tone ;
The wild rose trembled as its fragrant flowers
Fell on the dancing stream in snowy showers.

Heaven seemed to embrace the earth : from leaf to
leaf

The big drops trickled slowly to the ground,
As when the heart o'ercharged with sudden grief
Looks out through swelling eyes on friends around,
And finds in virgin tears its first relief ;

So one by one with dull and hollow sound
Those black drops earthward fell, until the rain
Burst like a torrent on the thirsty plain.

From leaden-hued clouds the blinding lightning broke

In fiery streams upon the darkened day :
Flash lighted flash, and thunder peals awoke

A louder clap, ere died the first away ;
The shivered branches of the blasted oak

Around their path in blackened fragments lay ;
Fiercer and fiercer still the tempest grew,
Or slackened its fury only to renew

Its fell career ; and Aubrey should have stood

In silent wonder that could never tire,

As o'erwrought Nature in her wildest mood

Breathed forth her anger in a flame of fire,

And in the storm that shook the startled wood

Heard but the echo of her sovereign's ire,

Or gazed in mute delight—but not have been

A trembling witness of so grand a scene.

He should have calmed her fear—had fear been rife

Within that dauntless bosom—not have called

On her for comfort, but the maddened strife

That raged o'erhead, his coward heart appalled ;

And he who gladly would have given his life

For her by sudden terror was enthralled ;

The strong man fled for succour to the weak,

And e'en in whispers scarcely dared to speak.

Strange thoughts were busy in his mind : it seemed
That for each flash, which, in its wanton play
Hither and thither wildly darting, streamed
Across the darkened face of summer day,
Ere from the bosom of the cloud it gleamed,
Was clearly traced the progress of its way ;
The death-roll was predestined ; hence the fear,
His name perchance might be engraven there.

Death was abroad, he knew ; the yawning tomb
Closed not its hungry lips, though day by day
Broadened the shadow of its endless gloom,
Though side by side the beautiful, the gay,
The babe that feebly struggled from the womb,
And Age that wrestled long, in silence lay ;
He knew, but felt not—saw, but never feared,
Till in that mighty tempest Death appeared.

The wounded chief that lay beneath the shade,

When fevered lips for water faintly cried,

Not for himself but for his comrade prayed ;

The gallant ship that breasts the raging tide

Forgets her danger, as she seeks to aid

The frail boat vainly battling by her side ;

So from the heart the fear of evil flies,

When in its grasp a fellow-creature lies.

Upon the very confines of the wood,

Embowered in trees, where Nature in a freak

Had piled a cairn of stones, a cottage stood ;

Hither with hurried steps they turned to seek

A refuge from the storm ; the startled blood

Forsook their cheeks, as one, wild, piercing
shriek

Rang through the air—a dull and hollow sound,

As of a body falling to the ground.

Told its sad tale, e'en as the shivered door
Flew from its hinges, and before them lay,
Breathless and almost bloodless on the floor,
A huddled heap—a blackened form of clay ;
The sturdy husband rose and knelt before
The stiffening limbs and watched, if but one ray,
One flickering life-beam glimmered in her breast,
Ere fled the spirit to its home of rest.

“ Faithless thou wert : it is forgotten now ;
Where is the husband's heart that dares to chide,
Gazing in sadness on thy death-dewed brow,
And bending o'er thee ravished from his side ?
Far better think upon that modest glow
Which lit with love the features of his bride :
Death clasps thee now, while love forgets and weeps—
The daisy blossoms where the felon sleeps.

“ Often I started from a midnight dream

To gaze on thy dear face—alas ! too fair—

Then like a sudden bright-eyed summer beam,

Smiling on our midwinter thou wert there ;

I thought the fragrance of thy love would stream,

Like early violets on the frosted air ;

Too late restored, too quickly snatched away,

The well-loved guest, that tarried but a day.

“ Long years I waited widowed and alone,

Treasured for thee a love thou wouldst not prize ;

Though sinful, yet thy sins I will not own,

For thou wert precious in thine husband's eyes ;

Unhallowed joys were thine, but thou art gone

Blessed with a constant love that never dies ;

Dead, yet alive—though lost, yet sweetly found—

The short-lived echo of a long-loved sound.”

Thoughts of a kindred nature wildly passed
Through the bereavèd husband's maddened
brain ;
Slowly he raised his listless eyes and cast
One glance upon the strangers, who in vain
Essayed a word of comfort, and aghast
Listened in trembling silence, as again
The secret feelings of his heart laid bare
Burst forth in tones of terror and despair.

“ She came—the lost one—clad in mourning guise,
Knelt at my feet and craved forgiveness there ;
I wiped the teardrops from her pleading eyes,
I bore with her, as only love can bear ;
The fiery lightning cleft the summer skies,
And left no time for penitence or prayer,
But laid her dead before me, as the light
First seemed to glimmer through a dreary night.

“ I loved her once—my young heart’s chosen bride,

When hope was bright, and faith was strong
and brave ;

I cursed her once—when through the ocean wide

She wandered with a stranger o’er the wave ;

Again I clasped her to my trembling side,

And thought to lead her gently home—the grave

Before me yawns—can her sad death atone

For sin ? can God His child in mercy own ?

“ Can He, the mighty God, Who bade her live,

Forget the creature fashioned by His hand ?

She blighted my young hopes and I forgive ;

Is He more stern ? and shall her spirit stand

Among the lost ? shall she for ever strive,

And strive in vain to reach the golden land ?

Vain are the tenets of a boasted creed,

If Justice strikes and Mercy will not plead.”

Ióne looked at Aubrey, but he stood
Unmoved, for in the presence of the dead
There came again, as in the storm-rocked wood,
The dim-seen vision of an awful dread ;
’T was not the old man’s voice that chilled his
blood,
But the cold corpse that lay uncovered ;
’T was not the hope of pardon, but the fear
Of death that hovered like a spectre there.

“ Tell him—my Aubrey—that a father’s care
Regards each simple flower, protects the dove,
And wills not that a creature should despair ;
Win back his soul to faith ; the Saviour’s love,
That would not—wished not on the cross to spare
His life-blood for mankind, still pleads above.”
Then from the ground the old man slowly raised
His eyes, and sternly, as he answered, gazed.

“ I know him well, and if he spoke of hope
’T would seem despair, or if he dared to bless
’T would change into a curse ; far better cope
With present ills than add to my distress ;
Far better all my life in darkness grope
Than think she passed from life to nothingness ;
Or fancy that the spirit when it flies
From its frail house of clay for ever dies.

“ I loved him once ; I thought the fire of youth
Would pass like fever from a heated brain ;
That reason, when matured, would cling to truth,
In spite of doctrines fanciful and vain,
And follow her sweet guidance, e’en as Ruth
Clung to her mother ;—hopes now rent in twain ;—
E’en from a serf it is too much to ask
To love a man who hides behind a mask.”

The mocking taunt was powerless to reveal
That for which trusting love could vainly plead ;
In prayer—or what seemed prayer—he dared to
kneel
Beside the living, but before the dead
He could not breath a hope he did not feel ;
If true, it called down curses on his head,
For he was false ; if false, 't was nothing worth
And perished in the moment of its birth.

Speechless he stood : to fear he would not own
That which belonged to love : conviction dies
Self-strangled if conceived through fear alone ;
If he forswore his Lord, he knew the prize
That crowned his golden visions would have flown ;
Before him lay the fatal sacrifice
Of love or conscience, but he could not now
Repeat the falsehood of his solemn vow.

One hope survived: "Íóne, let us go

And send relief, his mind is clouded o'er

With sudden grief; heed not the rambling flow

Of childish words; we never met before;

The woodland is a-light with sunny glow—"

When silently between him and the door

Glided a light young form, and standing there

Told him that they had met and told him where.

"Dost thou forget," the woodman fiercely cried,

"Our morning ramble in a budding wood?

Dost thou forget, or have thy lips belied

Thy heart, the grassy mound whereon we stood,

And held long converse in the sweet spring-tide,

Thy timely rescue from the yawning flood,

The oaken grove, where in the heat of youth,

The pride of reason scoffed at Christian truth?"

“ Speak but one word,” Ióne interposed,

“ And I believe : for thee I would have given
All that the happiness of life composed ;

The dearest ties of kindred would have riven
For wedded love with thee, till life was closed,

But not my faith in Christ, my hopes of heaven ;
Speak but one word, and scatter to the wind
The growing doubts that darken o’er my mind.”

Silence availed no longer, for the power

Of heaven-born eloquence was not so strong
As silence now ; and crowded in that hour

The feelings of a lifetime rushed along
And merged in one sad truth—the cherished flower

Was blighted in its beauty, and the song
Hushed in its sweetest measures, from the world—
His world of golden visions, he was hurled.

He might have known that in the circling year

That day would come, should fate so predispose,
That knowledge robbed the thought of half its
fear ;

That morning full of faith Ióne rose,
Unconscious that distrust was lurking near,
And dreamed not what a moment might disclose ;
E'en now with heart and eye upraised to heaven
She waited for an answer, when 't was given.

Love might have wept or fevered passion drank
The tears which wait on woe, or horror chilled
The life-blood in her veins ; she might have sank
Into a dream-like trance that would have stilled
Her heart ; or her great mind become a blank ;
One thought, which grew into a giant, filled
Her whole soul's being and her pathway crossed
At every turn—'t was he, the loved, the lost !

'T was hard when all he loved lay in his reach

To quit a home which could be his no more,

'T were vain to fancy he could strive to teach

Those who would censure what they praised
before ;

The wave that cast him headlong on the beach

Must waft him seaward to a fairer shore,

Or Rumour brooding o'er her new-born wrath

Would scent the footsteps traced upon his path.

So when misfortune strikes a gifted man,

His fellows, like a band of roaming thieves,

Ransack the past and gather what they can

Of truth and more that prejudice conceives,

The by-gone follies of his conduct scan,

And, as a gardener sweeps the flying leaves,

Pile heap on heap until he seems to be

A thing too vile for human sympathy.

Oh ! that the hopes o'er which we loved to dream
Should on the verge of fulness fade away,
And cast their blighted fruit upon the stream ;
E'en Moses shuddered as the mocking ray
Figured the glory of the golden gleam
Of that fair Eden, which before him lay ;
What ? though the weary wilderness was passed
The Jordan rolled between them at the last !

Hope flits before us, like a butterfly,
Luring the schoolboy on his toiling race ;
Wearied and faint at even we may lie,
The morrow finds us eager for the chase ;
From morn to eve we scan the lowering sky,
If but one gleam of sunlight we may trace ;
We curse each fall—we rise to fall again—
Yet what were earth without her, Grief and Pain ?

CANTO IV.

The Still Small Voice.

CANTO IV.

The Still Small Voice.

There was a sound of battle from afar ;
The lingering echoes broke upon the shore
From distant hills, where, in his crimsoned car,
Above the clash of arms—amid the roar
Of booming cannon—rode the God of War ;
And rumours thick and fast rushed on before,
And spread, like clouds of dust from coast to coast,
The silent heralds of a mighty host.

There was a restless spirit in the land,
A longing for the morn, ere morn drew nigh ;
All hearts were fixed upon the gallant band,
Which left our shores to conquer or to die ;
The blood at fever heat, the trembling hand,
Told that a nation's pulse was beating high ;
Excitement rose on tiptoe and believed
All that the fondness of its hope conceived.

Glad tidings flashed along the voiceless wire
From town to town, as bounded long ago
Across the mountain chain the beacon fire ;
A sharp short conflict with a routed foe—
The soaring eagle trampled in the mire—
The mighty city stormed without a blow,
That from her rocky heights so lately hurled
A proud defiance at a wondering world.

Men wept not for the hearts that nobly gave
Their life-blood for that triumph ; as of old
A nation's pride was kindled, and the grave
Won on those mountain summits seemed less cold ;
Men thought not that the crimsoned river-wave,
Red with the blood of thousands, madly rolled
To fill old ocean's waters ; as of yore
Her sons had proved her might—she wished no
more.

If one lone mother's spirit here and there
Was groaning for the darling son that died
In that dark valley ; if the widow's tear
Sprang to the eyes of one young maiden bride ;
A nation's voice was ringing with the cheer
For that brave conquest ; and a nation's pride
In those hot moments counted not the cost
Of those the widow and the orphan lost.

Joy from the nation's spirit fled estranged,

When morning dawned in answer to the laws
Of constant nature, and the scene was changed,

Hushed was the rapture of the night applause,
As in some air, by master minds arranged,

A burst of grandest music—then a pause—
For England dreamed not that a selfish mind
Could frame a rumour empty as the wind.

O ! that the soul-devouring lust of gold

Should trifle with a nation's hopes and fears ;
And look with eyes so lustreless and cold

Upon a mother's joy—a widow's tears ;
And in its own self-interest enfold

That which a nation to her sons endears,
Or barter for the slippery chance of wealth
The heart's best treasure and the spirit's health.

Ere wreathèd laurels fade upon the walls,
Or dies the echo of the song away
From hearts, that in those bright triumphant halls
At even danced in rapture blithe and gay ;
Ere roses wither, or remembrance palls
Upon the spirit, at the dawn of day
Hope darkens into fear, which doubt begets
Ere in her purple glory sunlight sets.

For tidings streamed across the snow-waved sea,
“ The city is not taken, but the shore
Is strewn with dead and dying, and the lea,
Which in her purple saffron blushed before,
Is red with blood and mocks with savage glee
Those who too soon the crown of triumph wore ; ”
Yet in the wail of sorrow there was still
A voice of joy—good ever wreathed with ill !

Good mixed with evil since the wondering earth

First sprang into new being at the word

Of One, who, at the moment of its birth,

From His own throne beheld the ocean stirred

By His own spirit, and the strains of mirth

Chaunted by angel choirs were loudly heard :

Who, as creation progressed, looked around—

Where all was good, no evil could be found.

Fair was the tree, but at its root the worm

Was gnawing as it blossomed : evil stood

Within the gates of Eden and his form

Gloomed o'er the stream that revelled in a flood
Of joy and brightness ; so the growing storm

Flings its black shadow on the sun-lit wood ;

Death watched the contest and the child of sin

Smiled grimly as he saw his parent win.

And in their train rushed on the crowd of woes,
Which wait on man, like vultures on their prey :
And as the golden gates began to close
From that lone garden stole a mournful lay,
Hymned by a few bright spirits, which arose
To follow man and cheer his dreary way :
All was not dark : for Faith and Hope and Love
Still walked on earth—still Mercy gleamed above.

The heaven was strewn with stars : the silver glow
Of moonlight streamed along the mountain
heights,
That glistened in their sparkling robe of snow ;
Across the valley glared the distant lights,
Where in their stronghold lay the stubborn foe ;
And in the silence of the dreary nights
The battered ramparts bravely rose again,
As if in answer to the magic strain,

Which reared of old a city from the ground :

Or at the dead of midnight, when the ray
Of moonlight was obscured, and darkness frowned,

Thirsting for blood and eager for the fray,
With silent tread and dull and muffled sound

Burst on the men who in their trenches lay,
And stained the solemn stillness of the night
With all the horrors of a motley fight—

A motley fight where foe was mixed with friend,

And all so intermingled that they knew
What was the issue only in the end,

And scarcely cared what blood their falchions
drew :

So on the deck the swarthy figures blend,

When boards the merchant-ship a pirate crew,
Contesting inch by inch and hand to hand
The frenzied onslaught of a desperate band.

And in that brave young band was one who fought
Madly and wildly in the foremost rank,
Where fiercest battle raged ; as if he sought
Death at the bristling bayonet's point, and drank
Fresh draughts of courage, as a glance he caught
Of dead and dying heaped upon the bank :
First from its sheath his gleaming falchion flashed,
First through the fray that slight-limbed figure
dashed.

A change had passed o'er Aubrey : he was blind
To all that once was dearest in his eyes ;
The fevered fancies of a childish mind—
Strong in its youth, that now in darkness lies,
Or rushes on in madness, like the wind,
From thought to thought, unconscious where it
flies—
Create no greater change than chill despair
Works in a heart that once was free from care.

They say that one sad night of sudden grief,
That watches with the stars in hope that day
Will at the burst of sunlight bring relief,
Has changed ere morn the golden locks to gray ;
His soul in answer to its own belief
Had passed into a form of stranger clay,
And scarcely knew itself or cared to know :
His spirit was athirst with martial glow,

And that was life to him ; he feared not death,
It could but waft him into nothingness,
And he was nothing : if the funeral wreath
Lay on his brow it could not make him less :
His life was one dark winter, summer breath
Wooded not his spirit with her warm caress ;
He lived but in excitement—he would die
On the hot battle-field without a sigh.

And he had learned to haunt the sacred hill,
Where daily, one by one, chief after chief
Was borne in sadness ; graves began to fill
With victims of the war ; it brought relief
To his lone soul to wander calm and still
Amid those new-born monuments of grief :
For friendless now he shed his latest tear
In his own land upon a mother's bier.

The voice of sorrow, as it wails the dead,
Changes its tone : the heart is reconciled
When glory flings a halo round the bed
Of fame ; and love, that o'er the darling child
Torn from its first embraces softly shed
One tear and looking up to Mercy smiled,
Weeps out its soul beside the flowers that wave
In saddened sweetness round a mother's grave.

So there are varied voices in the trees,

When on a moonlit eve their branches move

In answer to the whisper of the breeze

In mingled tones of sorrow and of love ;

In limes a hive-like murmuring of bees,

A sturdy rustle in the oaken grove,

The yew in sadness groans, the willows tell

In low faint accents of a last farewell !

So months rolled on 'mid battles bravely lost,

And battles nobly, vigorously won ;

As on the tender flowers the nipping frost,

Which in their new-born beauty woo the sun,

So passed a blight upon the gallant host

That lay on that cold heath, and one by one

Those death-struck legions melted, like the snow

Flake after flake into the earth below.

Fever was there with hot and tainted breath,
Spreading pollution through a host, that lay
Impatient for the battle, as beneath
The wounded skin black poison wends its way ;
And famine, gaunt and pale, freighted with death,
Reaping a richer harvest than the fray,
Drained out the life from hearts that would have died
Without a murmur on the rampart side.

Men on each other sternly looked, and fought
Bravely as if their hearts were strong with bread
And warm with wine, but far the bitterest thought
That preyed upon their spirit-life and fed
On their own hopes was that they vainly sought
Aid from that well-loved land for which they
bled :
Pent up, they perished like a flock of sheep,
Their rulers careless and their chiefs asleep.

Why should I sing of one—my words are vain—

Whose gallant heart each gallant deed inspired;

Whose gentle kindness fell, like summer rain,

On all who loved their chief, and never tired?

The white-lipped fiend of envy was his bane

And scorned the noble soul which courage fired;

For his own land, the darling of his pride,

He lived and loved, for her he nobly died.

Perchance 't is better that our hero pass

Unsung, unhonored; and that men should rave,

And hunt up virtues, which they write in glass,

And dig forgotten heroes from the grave

Of by-gone ages, which enshrined in brass

Stare proudly on the city: let us waive

His right to honors on each favored child

Of smiling fate extravagantly piled.

One wintry night, when all was dark around,
And the wild howling of the maddened gale
Drowned in its swelling roar each gentler sound,
Mocking the watchman's task : the pelting hail
Drove man and beast to shelter, and the ground
Was wreathed in snowy ridges, and the tale
Within the tents beguiled the dreary hours ;
And cannon booming from the sullen towers

Thundered across the plain and fiercer grew,
As on the eve of midnight from the gate
With noiseless tread stole forth a chosen few—
Hope blending in their beating hearts with hate ;
Ere from his parting lips the signal flew
At his dark post the watchman met his fate ;
Men slept and dreamed not that the hour of fight
Gloomed through the horrors of that stormy night.

And one by one, like ants that climb a hill
In single file, crept on that gallant band ;
The trenches silently began to fill,
Nor, till the heated breath of foemen fanned
Their brows, dreamed those who lay so calmly still
In sleep that death itself was close at hand ;
Till blazed the torches, till the shout arose
That told them of the presence of their foes.

Then rolled the tide of battle to and fro
With varied fortune ; as the giant rock
Hurls back the waves that fret and fume below,
Old England's sons, recovered from the shock
Of that fierce onslaught, drove the stubborn foe
Through mangled corpses that began to block
The entrance to the trenches, and again
Rushed back, as starting from behind the slain,

Fresh hosts were flung upon them ; as the fire

Of fever rushes through a maddened brain,

And leaves its victim ; as the fond desire

Which rules our heart dies but to rise again ;

As the sweet music of the soft-toned lyre

Breathes forth in turn a sad and plaintive strain ;

So through the blackness of that moonless night

Wavered the fortune of the doubtful fight.

Fiercely the combat raged ; brave deeds were
wrought,

None knew who wrought them ; all was dark
around :

Sword flashed on sword ; and still they madly fought,

Till mangled corpses strew'd the sweltering ground ;

None granted mercy, none for mercy sought,

Or knew who conquered, till the sullen sound

Of steps retreating and the trumpet blast

Told that old England triumphed at the last.

They watched in silence, or with faltering breath
 Whispered of hope, which hopeless fancies gave ;
Their hearts were with their comrades on the heath,
 So bare and cold ; their thoughts were with the
 brave,
Whose features slowly stiffened into death,
 The brave they could not raise a hand to save :
In vain were torches lit, their flickering light
Died in the blast of that tempestuous night.

They knew beneath that cold unpitying sky
 Upon the mountain ridges many a form
Gasped forth its spirit, left alone to die,
 Mangled and bleeding, writhing like a worm ;
They knew—in fancy might have heard—the cry,
 The last of life, that mingled with the storm ;
And that beneath their winding sheet of snow,
Piled side by side in death, lay friend and foe.

Soon as the pale stars gleamed, soon as the ray
Of morning brightened as the night clouds fled,
A sad procession wound its solemn way
Along the heights and laid upon its bed
What seemed a senseless form of breathless clay,
A bold young hero numbered with the dead :
Unknown, yet dear to all ; careless of fame
His dauntless courage won itself a name.

His brow was pale and cold : the hues of life
Had left his marble features—once the pride
Of that fond mother's heart, when faith was rife
Within her bosom and on him relied
For all her hopes—and in the hottest strife
He fell, and yawning in his stiffened side
Gaped a huge wound, staunch'd by the icy cold
Of that dark night upon the wintry wold.

Was it some spirit from a golden land

That hovered round the bed whereon he lay ?

Came there some white-robed bright-eyed seraph
band

From regions far beyond the realms of day ?

By gentle hands his fevered brow was fanned,

Beside his couch sweet voices seemed to pray

In heartfelt tones when life was on the wane :

Or were they visions of his heated brain ?

He scarcely knew that by his darkened bed

Flitted a fair young form with footsteps light ;

He scarcely heard the echo of her tread,

Yet through the sunlit days and night by night

She watched by those who for her country bled ;

Nun-like and pale and robed in snowy white

A brave young choir of sisters by her side

Sung of the Lamb who once for sinners died.

Books lay around him ; but in vain he tried,
As stronger grew the life within his frame
So rudely shattered on that mountain side,
To catch one glimmer of the heaven born flame
With wandering listless mind and unquenched pride
Which wreathed with love the Saviour's glorious
name ;
Till glanced his eyes, as waned one summer day,
Upon the words—" I am the Truth—the Way ! "

He heard them once on Magdalen's topmost tower
One bright fresh morning at the birth of May,
When youth exulting in its springtide hour
Rushed on rejoicing in its sunlit day ;
Then like the scent of some night-blooming flower
Their sweetness pleased his soul and passed away ;
The past flashed back, and as remembrance grew
That hour revived in colors bright and new.

They were not strange to him ; but now they seemed
To stand out from the page, a fuller light
Of illustration on the passage beamed ;
Day after day and night succeeding night,
Around—about him through the darkness gleamed
The form of one, who practised in his sight
Those very precepts : could the deeds she wrought
Afford the answer which his spirit sought ?

Conversion gleams not from the east or west
Upon a certain hour or stated day ;
As if the heart, plucked from the quivering breast,
Were re-created of a purer clay ;
Like age that fondly trusted to be blessed
With youth, and yielded up its limbs a prey
To magic spells, by joyous hope beguiled,
As o'er her victim-slave the sorceress smiled.

The soul may fiercely strive and strive in vain

For long long years, nor feed on hopes fulfilled ;

May wrestle with its doubts and turn again

Into its darkness ; hardened and self-willed

Resist the Spirit, which like gentle rain

Falls from on high ; may feel its bosom thrilled

With joy, may seem to rest in faith and find

Hope fearful still, faith fickle as the wind.

The hill that leads from unbelief is steep

And rarely to be climbed without a guide ;

Along the mountain heights dark spirits keep

Their sullen watch ; the road is barred by pride ;

Still o'er the ridges tottering limbs may creep,

Though yawning ravines gape on either side,

If in a child-like trust they watch and pray,

And rest on Him who is Himself the way.

The sun that in his summer brightness glows
Falls on each budding plant with varied power ;
Changes the circlets of the guelder-rose,
Which shadows forth the outline of its flower,
From green to snowy whiteness as it grows ;
Or gilds with sudden beauty in an hour,
And floods his favored tree with showers of gold,
Like amorous Jove the luckless maid of old.

So on the soul that struggles with its fears,
Or hugs its doubts, may dawn almost by stealth
The sun of faith ; or, after dreary years,
May pour the richness of its spirit-wealth ;
The pale wan face, which overflowed with tears,
Beam with the sunny smile of new-born health ;
Yet, day by day, that beam unfelt—unknown—
To the full glory of its light has grown.

So o'er his troubled spirit beamed the ray

Of Faith triumphant o'er his stubborn pride ;

Faith humbly walking in the one true way,

Faith closely clinging to the one true guide ;

Love lent her aid and taught his soul to pray,

Hope gleamed in new-born beauty by his side ;

That night, that happy night, a murmured prayer

Rose to his God and found an answer there.

What was it saved the immortal soul from death ?

He knew not then—but when, in after years,

O'er her fair brow was twined the orange wreath,

And hope fulfilled laughed at her maiden tears,

When her deep love and gentle guiding breath

Spread sunlight o'er his heart and calmed his
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He knew that far above the blessed Three

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